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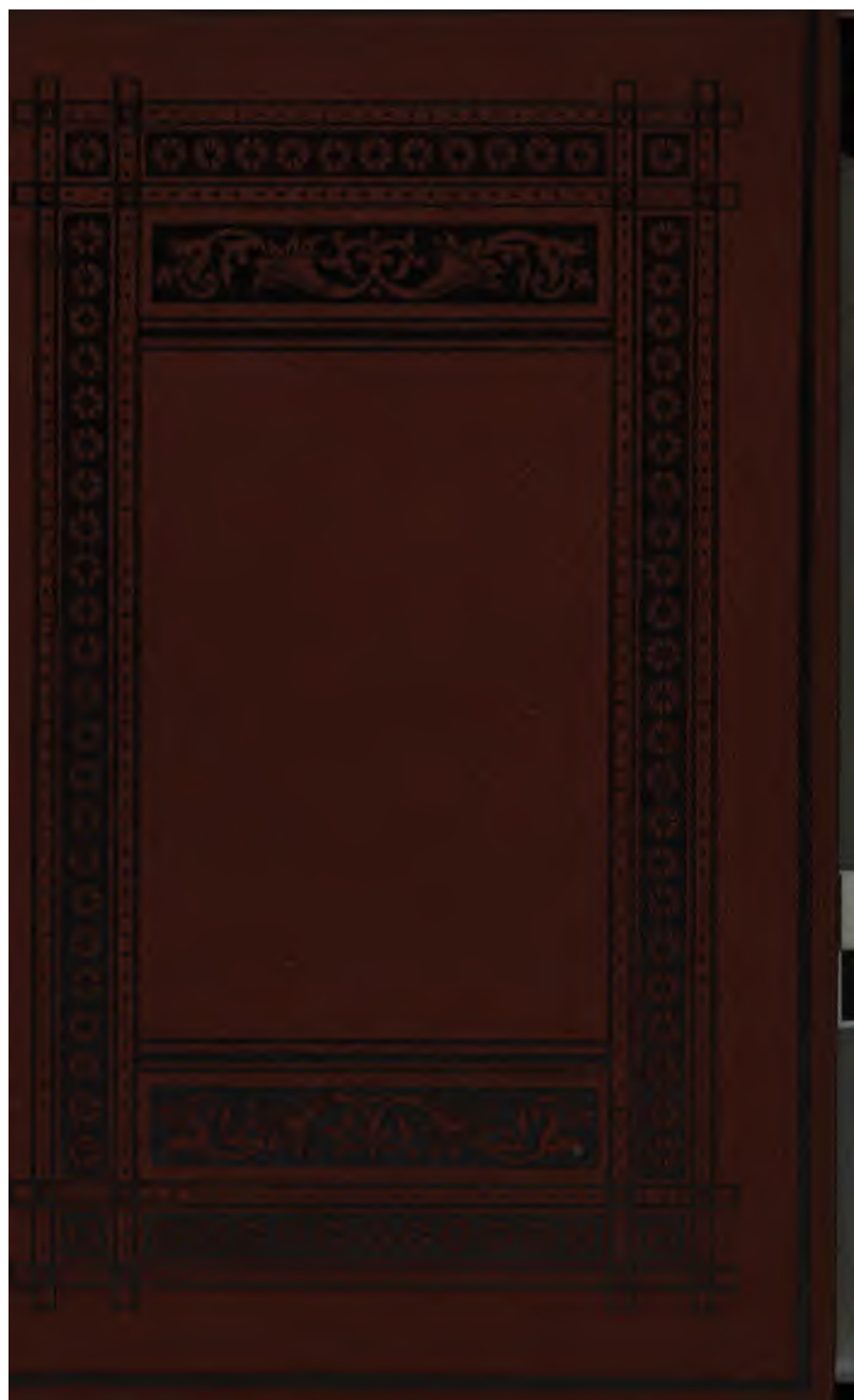
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IN THE LAP OF FORTUNE

A Story

"STRANGER THAN FICTION."

By JOSEPH HATTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE VALLEY OF POPPIES," "THE TALLANTS OF
BARTON," ETC.

"To be thrown upon one's own resources is to be cast IN THE VERY LAP
OF FORTUNE; for our faculties then undergo a development, and display
an energy, of which they were previously unsusceptible."—FRANKLIN.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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IN THE LAP OF FORTUNE.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

THE STORY OF A STORY.



WHEN I was a boy I saw the discovery of a murder. The tragedy was relieved from barren horror by some lights and shadows of romance. My father attended the inquest and published a plan of the deed, a map of murderous footsteps. One of the chief criminals occasionally visited my father's office. A thrill of terror shook our little household when we looked back and remembered that he had made a busi-

ness call upon my father a few days after the murder.

The scene of the crime was on my way to school. In the dark evenings of autumn I passed it hurriedly and with a shudder, whistling for companionship ; but the cry of the stricken man followed me, and the drooping figure of his sweetheart haunted me in my dreams. When first I began to write, which was at a very early age, this story of Middleton-in-the-Water arose before me with that strange mystic-looking ground-plan drawn by my father. The ancient mariner was not more the slave of his story than I was slave to this record of blood that tinged the imagination of my youth.

At eighteen I began to relieve my soul of its ghostly burthen. Two or three years afterwards the gleam of my watchman's lantern radiated the pages of a provincial magazine. That was in 1863 ; shortly afterwards a limited number of this work was published in London. It was my first novel. I regarded it with a pride

that has long since evaporated. Nevertheless to do justice to the materials thus clumsily thrown together, became one of my cherished desires. In the present work I have acted on my more matured instincts, with what result it is not for me to say. I could not let the book go forth without this explanation. The story is in some respects recast; fresh incidents are introduced here and there; it is almost wholly re-written, and on the score of literary execution may fairly be regarded as a new work. If it is not "my favourite child," it is in spirit and action my first born; and if I may accept as fair token of successful labour, the kindly and distinguished notice which it has received during its wayward career in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, I feel that I may rely upon the sympathies of the general reader in this re-introduction of my first-born, newly dressed, and with a fresh set of thoughts and manners.

It was dedicated to a dear friend, this story of my boyhood, a dear friend who de-

spite the perils of the literary highway encouraged me to go on. When that dedication was written Mark Lemon seemed to be in the hey-day of a second youth; Thackeray and Dickens were both alive; they were not yet engaged upon their last contributions to our instruction and pleasure; the world was going merrily round; Mark Lemon had not even thought of his "Falstaff" tour. All this was only yesterday. Yet it seems ages ago since the bells tolled at my poor friend's funeral, reviving loving memories of those who had gone before.

Carefully revising my earlier impressions of the character and work of Mark Lemon, I find no reason for altering a single word of my original dedicatory tribute, except, alas! the necessity of adapting it to the present time by a sad and solemn formality.

To the Memory of
MARK LEMON,
EDITOR OF "PUNCH ;"
AND A WRITER, WHO, FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS,
ADORNED
DRAMATIC, BALLAD, AND MISCELLANEOUS LITERATURE,
WITH A PEN THAT TOUCHED
ALL THE NOBLEST SENTIMENTS OF THE HUMAN HEART ;
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,
IN REMEMBRANCE OF HOURS MADE HAPPY
BY HIS GENIAL SOCIETY,
AND IN GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF LITERARY ADVICE
FREELY AND GENEROUSLY GIVEN TO
THE AUTHOR.



CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES THE HERO AND OTHER PERSONS,
MATTERS, AND THINGS, OF IMPORTANCE IN
THIS STRANGE, EVENTFUL HISTORY.



BRIGHT bit of North-Midland landscape. A shallow, shingly reach of river flowing through mowing grass, and skirting the high-road of Middleton-in-the-Water.


There are cattle standing at a distant bend of the river. The foreground has a group of children playing within the shadow of an ancient bridge. An artist might paint the picture, and call it "Peace," though the bridge was the scene of a bloody battle in olden days, and in modern times had been the subject of many a noisy

dispute at Quarter Sessions. The authorities differed concerning the ownership of the bridge. City and county both refused to acknowledge the responsibility of repairing it. The local journals always contained racy reports of magisterial eloquence whenever the Middleton bridge was mentioned to the Court for repairs. I do not propose to enter into the details of this exciting local question. The bridge belongs to history, and it occupies as prominent a place in the foreground of this story as it does in the landscape upon which the curtain rises.

The children by the river never dream that the everlasting scene-shifter is at their elbows. They have fished and bathed in the quiet waters. They have despatched fleets of imaginary ships beneath the shadowy portals of the ancient bridge to more shadowy countries beyond the Middleton meadows. By-and-by they will play at a higher game, with the rough river of life for their ocean, and human hopes for their ships at sea.

The shadow of the county bridge falls gently upon the calm and sunny river—falls as if it were the welcome shadow of a familiar friend. And so it is ; for they are old companions, bridge and river. The children would have stood aghast could they have heard even a whisper of the sights which these old friends had seen together. Strange stories of battle, murder, and sudden death, had been acted out in presence of the county bridge and the Middleton river. But who could think of anything that was not full of summer-days in presence of the tender evening lights and the soft fading shadows ? It was like a dream of childhood, this picture of the world outside of towns.

But we are old hands now, you and I, my friend. We know when the curtain rises on a sunny scene of rural happiness that the orchestra is provided with characteristic strains for other incidents in the drama. Behind that artistic glimmer in the first act we know the storm is brewing. We know that the soft and gentle music



will send up in due course mysterious chromatic passages with violinistic suggestions of treasons, stratagems and spoils. And so it is with this real picture in this real drama. Already a cloud of mystery begins to settle down upon the mill by the Middleton river. Even the children are at last disturbed in their innocent amusements. The great scene-shifter is at work. He obeys no noisy whistle. You cannot tell when he will begin to move. He needs no prompter. His scenes never hitch; he makes no mistakes; he works by immutable regulations. Let us accept his changes humbly, and be thankful.

While we are moralising, another shadow falls upon the water. It threatens the destiny of one of the real figures in the foreground of the real picture. It is the shadow of a woman. At first it is a long, strange-looking shadow, contesting the very existence of the reflection of the bridge itself. By degrees it becomes less and less, until it disappears behind its owner, who stands in the grim majesty of a stranger

before the children who helped to make up this picture of peace and quiet.

"Where does Mr. Alfred Martyn live?" asks the new comer.

"Here, Jacob Martyn," shouts the first boy addressed, "here Jacob, come and show this woman where your father lives."

Thereupon came forth Jacob, who up to that time had been intently engaged in directing the course of an East India ship across a stormy sea, said ship being the trunk of an ancient oak which had lost all its branches, save one shrivelled stump. This solitary reminiscence of the great tree's arms served for a mast, which Jacob Martyn had ordered his crew to cut down in the hope of saving the storm-pressed vessel.

"Are you Jacob Martyn?" asked the woman.

"Yes," said Jacob, holding his head down, and making a mental inventory of the lower portion of the questioner's travel-stained garments.

"Have you ever heard of your aunt

Keziah?" she asked, taking the boy by the hand, "your aunt Keziah, who lives in London?"

"Yes," again said Jacob, venturing to lift his eyes as high as the woman's waist, and examining the exterior of a quaint-looking bag, fastened there by a faded link of bonnet ribbon.

"Well, I am your aunt Keziah," exclaimed the strange woman, with an air of triumph not unmingled with defiance, as if she gloried in her individuality, and was prepared to defend herself against any number of spurious aunt Keziahs who might question her rights and privileges.

This time little Jacob made no reply, but his black eyes travelled beyond the ribbon-tied bag, and up to his aunt's face, with an eager, wondering look; for Jacob *had* heard of his aunt Keziah, and strange were the stories which made her name familiar in the boy's memory.

Without another word aunt Keziah took possession of her nephew, took him by the arm, and marched away with him.

From that moment Jacob's troubles and adventures commenced. Play was over with him for ever. He had sailed his last ship to India, caught his last minnow, staked his last marble, and fought his last battle with savages among the thistles of the adjacent common. Aunt Keziah had arrived. She and Fate were introducing Jacob Martyn to his Destiny.

Let us take note of aunt and nephew as they move along the shabby street that leads to Mr. Martyn's house. The woman is of middle age, with a large quantity of grey hair escaping, in jaunty curls, from a showy bonnet trimmed with ribbons of all colours. Upon her shoulders she wears a curiously figured shawl; and her black dress is variegated with dust, giving evidence of a long journey on foot. From her waist hangs a velvet bag, drawn together by many rings and suspended by a faded ribbon. In one hand she carries a dusty umbrella, and by the other she leads her somewhat unwilling and wondering companion, Jacob Martyn, a boy of thir-

teen. Jacob is nothing more than an ordinary-looking boy, except that he has large black eyes which seem to have a world of their own to wander in.

Mr. Martyn was a printer and publisher. His establishment, to which these two were walking, stood in an old-fashioned street some distance from the spot indicated in the first few lines of this chapter. It was a dingy-looking place in front; but at the back there was one of those fruitful, miscellaneous, carefully tended gardens, which seem more particularly to belong to the Midland counties, where one o'clock dinners, eight o'clock suppers, and garden arbours still linger.

Jacob and his aunt entered Mr. Martyn's shop just as a very savoury smell was issuing from the snug parlour behind; a smell that suggested something stewing in a saucepan with a judicious mixture of herbs; stewing on a clean hob, in presence of a polished fender and a white cloth on a round table laid for two; a smell which seemed to titillate the nostrils of aunt

Keziah's long nose, and soften the corners of that hard mouth which was the unmistakable portal of mischief-making words.

"What! you here?" exclaimed Mr. Martyn, with more of annoyance in his manner than surprise, and more of surprise than pleasure, "you here! bless my life, what particular quarter of the sky has dropped you down at Middleton?"

"No part of the sky at all, brother Alfred," replied aunt Keziah, still revelling in that delicious culinary perfume that came out in double force in company with Mr. Martyn as he flung open the parlour door.

"Come in, come in; at all events you must be hungry; you look as dusty as if you had been running in the Middleton female steeple-chases for a gingham gown," said Mr. Martyn, referring to the civilized sports of the period.

After supper, aunt Keziah told a long tale of matrimonial infelicities; in the midst of which Jacob was permitted to escape into the garden. Aunt Keziah, according to her own showing, had been the amiable,

self-denying, generous wife of a brutal husband, a schoolmaster, who had varied the occupation of flogging boys by occasionally beating the woman whom he had sworn to love and cherish. Aunt Keziah had submitted to this for the sake of peace; her sharp thin lips had never ventured even to remonstrate; her beaky, bird-of-prey nose had not even indicated the slightest feeling of disdain; the kind-hearted, submissive wife had bowed her head to the cane—at least so the kind-hearted, submissive wife told her brother; and it was only when the cruel husband had substituted the poker for the stick that the tender, patient wife had remonstrated; only when he laid down the poker and took up the carving knife, with sundry threatening references to *coup la gorge*, that she had resolved upon running away.

Mr. Martyn and his sister had never loved each other with the sweetness which is supposed to pervade the love of brothers and sisters. He had had some experience of her sharp firm voice in days gone by,

and had pitied Mr. Gompson when certain church bells were ringing years ago to celebrate the second marriage of aunt Keziah. Nevertheless, her account of Mr. Gompson's ill-treatment was sufficient inducement for the generous brother to offer his sister a home; and aunt Keziah having come to Middleton-in-the-Water for a home, took off her shawl, laid down her bag, untied her bonnet strings, and accepted his offer forthwith.

Meanwhile, Jacob Martyn was taking a last free and unfettered walk in that old-fashioned country garden which in his eyes was the pride and glory of his father's house. In one favourite corner was arranged his own garden, two feet by four, where each year, so long as he could remember, blossomed a sweet-scented white violet, which had been set there by his brother the day before he died; and close by this little plot of the boy's freehold was a favourite seat of his mother's, who used to sit there and sew, and talk to Jacob, in those happy days before she, too, passed

away, and had a tombstone erected to her memory in the great cold churchyard of the cruel dingy town of Middleton.

One side of the garden was bordered by a high wall, which shut out a row of houses, and served for the cultivation of wall trees that bore a variety of forbidden plums and peaches. On another side Jacob's paradise was hemmed in by an orchard, which, in its turn, was hemmed in by green fields fringed with that very river on which the sun is shining in our first chapter. On another side, the sunbeams, when they wandered to that quarter of the world, were shut out by a factory—a great block of bricks, pierced with hundreds of windows, whence came the sound of whirling wheels and bobbins, mingled with the voices of girls singing at their work, and making the hot stifling factory appear to Jacob more like a fairy temple than a miserable unhealthy slavehouse, as it was.

Swallows built their round nests under the factory window-sills, and went twittering through the orchard hard by. Black-

birds sung in the fields. Red-breasts and linnets trilled vocal chants in the apple trees. The laughter of children came over the wall from the row of houses ; and the distant hum of the river wandered through the orchard with the scent of fields and flowers.

It was a paradise indeed, that little garden, where Jacob used to dream of angels and fairies, and wonder what he should do when he was a man, and whether his mother and brother would watch over him until he died and went to heaven.

Children have an intuitive sense of character. When Jacob went to bed that night the strongest impression in his mind was, that he disliked his aunt Keziah. The boyish nature had taken alarm. A shadow had fallen upon the dial of the boy's mind, indicating the noon of childish freedom. A presentiment of evil had sprung up and filled the boy's thoughts. Something told him that aunt Keziah could and would make herself very disagreeable ; not that she had said or done anything to

excite his especial aversion. She had taken his hand kindly, but had rather seemed to drag him along, than to walk with him in amiable companionship. Perhaps it was the recent death of his mother that made him feel a keen aversion to the picture of a strange woman sitting in his mother's chair. Whatever had brought about this miserable condition of Jacob's mind, the poor fellow, instead of calmly laying his head upon the pillows to sleep, could only toss about and bury his face in the bed-clothes, and feel that he was nothing but a wretched, lonely, motherless boy.

"Don't cry, don't cry, Jacob," by-and-by said an honest sympathetic voice, "you will only spoil your dear face and be ill. Go to sleep, my lad, go to sleep; Tom is going out with Cæsar in the morning, and I'll call you up early to go with him."

The comforter was Susan Harley, who had been some years in Mr. Martyn's service, and whose affections seemed to be divided between Jacob and certain very

shiny dish-covers and saucepans, which were the cabinet pictures of her kitchen—her Vandykes, Turners, Hunts, Landseers, and Faeds.

Under the influence of Susan's tender words of comfort, Jacob soon forgot the vague sense of misfortune which had agitated his little mind at the advent of his aunt Keziah. Forget! Forget, did I say? I, the faithful chronicler of this history? I can hardly say he forgot. During the night he was in endless trouble and difficulty. He fell off houses, was pushed off rocks, was glared at by idiots. The only face which he distinctly saw in his dreaming was that of his newly-arrived relative. In the morning the only words which he could remember to have heard during his nocturnal perils were uttered by a mocking voice, which said triumphantly, and in threatening tones :—

“ Well, *I* am your aunt Keziah.”

He did not know it, and she did not know it; but in another part of the great world there was a girl about his own age,

who was just beginning to have troubles and anxieties of her own; a pretty soft-hearted little thing, who seemed only made for happiness. Fortune is wayward and fickle. She scatters troubles where least they are expected, and when most they seem unlikely to come. By remote and crooked paths she brings people together who never heard of each other before, and in ways the most extraordinary she depends the weal or woe of these people upon their liking or disliking each other. Through the mist which has gathered about these early days of Jacob Martyn's career, the historian sees shadowed forth another face, besides that of aunt Keziah, and another voice which shall influence his destiny for good or evil, far more than that of the stranger who has just broken in upon the calm present and undrawn the bolt of a stormy future.



CHAPTER II.

AUNT KEZIAH ASSERTS HER AUTHORITY.

THOMAS TITSY, or Tom Tit, as he was not unfrequently called, in short, for his more imposing name, or in playful allusion to his height, was Mr. Alfred Martyn's factotum. He polished the household boots, cleaned the household knives, and was the household's Mercury; in addition to which he was partially retained for the more onerous and more mysterious duties of printer's devil. He neither looked his character of Mercury nor devil. He was tall, angular, heavy, slow, and healthy. There never was in the world a printer's devil so clean and well dressed, and merry, as Tom Titsy.

His face was a perpetual May-day, it had a smile all over it ; there was a genial shimmer of content in every awkward dimple. It may, indeed, be said that he rejoiced in a broad open countenance. I say rejoiced, advisedly. There was nothing but rejoicing from chin to forelock. He rejoiced in blue eyes, in a stumpy nose, in red cheeks, and in red hair. Tom could do almost anything and everything but that which was the ambition of his life. He wished to be a printer ; but he could not set up types. He had learned the boxes by heart. He knew where every letter lay, but he might as well have tried to analyse a watch with a bodkin, or wear a pair of kid gloves, as pick up those bits of metal and arrange them for the press. By dint of an amount of finger exercise worse than that demanded of young pianistes by Czerny, and an effort of intellect equal to the solution of the hardest problem in Euclid, Tom had succeeded once or twice in setting up a paragraph ; but successes of this kind had been achieved at such a cost of mental

and bodily vigour, to say nothing of the patience they demanded at the hands of the reader, that Tom soon gave up the Caxtonian art, and consoled himself with the performance of the general and useful duties supposed to be combined in the classic description of "head man and bottle-washer."

Tom was the proud and fortunate owner of a dog, something between a mastiff and a Newfoundland, which was the source of much anxiety to that limited circle of society in which Tom moved. The animal had come into his possession as a legacy from a Frenchman (originally a prisoner on his parole at Middleton), who had lodged with Tom's mother, and had died in her house. The dog was called Cæsar, and there was a certain imperial look about him which did canine justice to the title. He had a noble head, an intelligent eye, a firm heavy paw, an extravagant quantity of tail, and an amount of bark that was appalling. Coupled with this, there was a joyous activity in the brute which kept

people continually watchful and wary. He was not vicious, but his frivolity and fun were so much disguised by his imperial Roman dignity, that his general conduct may be described as alarming, and more particularly among persons who were not acquainted with his peculiarities.

It was the society of this buoyant and honest couple to which Susan had referred in her consoling address to Jacob, and for the pleasures of which the boy rose up in the morning at sight of the earliest sun-beam that fell upon the diamond-shaped panes of his little bed-room window. In the midst of dressing, Jacob was eagerly talking with Susan about the frolics of his morning's run with Tom and Cæsar. Stimulated by the deep-mouthed bay of Cæsar under the window, and excited by Tom's equally deep-mouthed bay of "Lie down, dog; lie down, Cæsar," Jacob had rapidly finished his toilette, and was just setting forth, when, who but aunt Keziah should march into the room, which no other woman but Susan had invaded since Mrs.

Martyn came there for the last time and blessed her poor little son.

“What are you going to do with that boy?” asked aunt Keziah, smoothing her apron, and evidently determined that her new and voluntary duties, as the head of the household, should begin without the smallest possible delay. She had said to Mr. Martyn on the previous night, that his son required great care and attention; and Mr. Martyn had acquiesced in that profound sentiment.

“Why, he is going out with Tom for a run, marm, before breakfast,” said Susan, buttoning the last button of Jacob’s coat.

“A run before breakfast!” said Mrs. Gompson, with marked emphasis, and smiling with high disdain upon Susan. “A run before breakfast! I should think it probable, young woman, that you are likely to have a run *after* breakfast yourself some fine morning if this is to continue; pulling the boy from his bed, and sending him out for a *run before breakfast*, endangering his health and his morals. Undress

the boy, undress him immediately, madam," said aunt Keziah.

It is a remarkable, but no less positive and certain fact, that among women of Susan Harley's class, nothing gives greater offence than to be called "madam" or "woman." In the present instance the "epithet" was accompanied with such a disdainful toss of the head, that Susan Harley, as she afterwards told an intimate friend, felt as if she must either expire on the spot, or scratch that woman's eyes out.

"Madam!" exclaimed Susan, "don't madam me, marm; I'm not used to it, never was used to it, and, what is more, never will be; Master Jacob has always gone out in a morning before, and——"

"Don't answer me, you impertinent creature!" screamed aunt Keziah, at the same time making a dash at Jacob; "put that boy to bed again."

Jacob eluded his aunt's grasp, and darted behind Susan, who was sobbing and choking herself with rage and vexation. Would she had never had more serious troubles than

this incident in the domestic discipline of Jacob's home !

The window of the room in which this altercation took place looked out upon what was called the back-kitchen, a low-roofed part of the house, which Tom (hearing the unaccustomed noise and bandying of angry words) had ascended in some alarm, rendered greater by his ignorance of the arrival of Mrs. Gompson. Cæsar had followed Tom, of course, and in his anxiety to render whatever assistance might be necessary, Tom had neglected to exercise any control over the movements of the dog, which, just as aunt Keziah dashed towards her nephew, made a similar movement towards aunt Keziah, and, coming at a bound through the open window, laid that unhappy matron prostrate upon what had a moment previously been the scene of her triumph over Susan Harley.

Horrified and alarmed, Tom came head foremost after his dog, bringing with him a dressing-table and looking-glass, and all the time bawling—"Seize-her, seize-her! come

off, come off!" which, though to ordinary ears might sound like a strange jumble of commands, was thoroughly understood by the dog for which Tom's orders were intended.

Mr. Martyn arrived upon the scene in time to complete the grand tableau, and after hearing a narrative of the whole story, and having an assurance from Mrs. Gompson herself that she was not hurt, he made a painful effort not to laugh ; but he did not succeed in this praiseworthy desire to spare the feelings of his visitor. The astonished company in Jacob's bedroom, assembled so suddenly and so strangely, could hear Mr. Martyn's loud and hearty laugh all the way to that gentleman's bedroom.

Taking his cue from his master, Tom also began to laugh. Susan's face gradually reflected back the joyous glow of Tom's open countenance. Jacob looked up wickedly at his aunt. Then Susan tittered, and next Susan and Tom commenced a laughing chorus, in the midst of which Cæsar

entered upon a series of lively performances on his own account. Mrs. Gompson, picking up a bundle of false curls, marched from the scene, head erect, back straight, nose in air, and a bitter resolve in her heart.

Upon the departure of aunt Keziah, Tom intimated that he could hold out no longer, that he should split his sides. Susan was sure she should kill herself, and little Jacob joined in the general hilarity. The room fairly shook with Tom's laughter, and at the risk of breaking his neck, that honest ungainly retainer of the Martyns felt it incumbent upon him to roll out upon the tiles as a precautionary measure against the inconvenience and pain of splitting his sides in downright earnest.

All this time Cæsar barked, jumped in and out of the window, ran to Tom, who was lying in the yard beating the ground with his feet, darted off the tiles and ran to Susan, administered sundry wet salutes upon Jacob, and finally rolled down the roof to Tom, in the company of a collection

of hard clattering tiles and soft sympathetic lichens and house-leek.

Henceforth, however, Mrs. Gompson was determined to rule that household despotically. Her chief attention was devoted to her nephew. For his especial behoof she devised all manner of schemes of domestic economy, which included limitations of sugar, and additional supplies of fat meat. By a series of insidious hints, she had gradually succeeded in obtaining Mr. Martyn's full endorsement of her system. She had not told him in direct terms that the late Mrs. Martyn had killed Jacob's brother and herself too, by bad management; but she had made her brother believe that he had over-estimated his wife's ability; and Mr. Martyn was too much engaged with his business to think very much about anything else.

Sent to bed early, carefully prevented from associating with vulgar companions, made to be regular in his attendance at the day school, and compelled to pore over his tasks at night, Jacob's moral and physical

health were so well cared for that the boy gradually became shy, morbid, stupid. Mrs. Gompson complained so constantly of his bad conduct, and his father had grown so indifferent to him owing to his sister's numerous and irritating charges, that poor Jacob began to think he was in everybody's way, a plague to those about him, a worthless piece of humanity. His life became a torment to him, he grew timid and cowardly; and yet there would occasionally rise up the conviction that he was not judged aright, that he had capabilities and feelings which, had he dared to exhibit them, must have commanded approbation.

By-and-by there came a gloomy day in Jacob's career, which cast a dark shadow upon his boyish life. Ever since school had closed, he had for a slight offence been shut in his room, with a limited supply of bread and water, and a command to go to bed. The birds were singing in the garden, which was shut out from his view by a building in the yard, which said building must be passed ere the garden wicket was

reached. Jacob could hear the music of the factory and the voices of boys and girls at play. His heart told him he had done no wrong. There arose within him a burning sense of injustice. Only twelve months had elapsed since his mother died, and twelve months prior to that he had a companion in his brother. Now he was cut off from all he loved. Susan dared not come near him. He had even been denied the society of Tom and his dog. His father said he was wicked and ungrateful. One moment the suffering boy longed to cling to his father's neck and pour out his overflowing soul; at another moment dark thoughts agitated the little mind, weighted at these times with sorrow and longing for his dead mother. At length his miseries appeared to grow and grow until they filled the room and threatened to stifle him. The sorrows of childhood, though they appear unimportant to the grown-up man, are bitter as the troubles which tear the heart in maturity.

Jacob had heard of people drowning

themselves with their woes. The distant murmur of the river mingled its wooing music with the soft evening breeze. To Jacob it seemed to whisper an invitation.

Under the influence of some fearful spell, Jacob climbed through the window, descended into the yard, walked quickly, but firmly, on through the garden. Kissing his mother's seat, kissing the leaves of his brother's violet, he went on through the orchard towards the mill-pool.

The sudden exercise and the refreshing breeze chased away some of the fever of the boy's brain. He became calmer and more subdued when he reached the bank of the river. It was the calmness which is often full of anger and passion. The miller sat smoking his evening pipe near the spot to which Jacob's disordered mind had directed him. Still the boy's fearful resolve was unshaken. To his other fears was now added the peril of returning home. Let not the reader imagine that this is an overdrawn picture. The newspaper records of late years have con-

tained many cases of suicide among comparative children. It is no exaggeration to say that the sensibilities of many a child of thirteen are as keen and active as they are at thirty. Jacob Martyn was an example in point. It is true he had had an exceptional experience of sorrow and domestic tyranny. He sat down by the mill-pool, with his brain throbbing against his temples, and his heart leaden and still, waiting until the miller should knock the ashes out of his pipe and go home.

It is doing the memory of Jacob's mother no disparagement in fancying that her spirit was abroad on this summer evening years ago. If those we love can after death revisit the scenes of their life below, on missions of love and mercy, it is in keeping with the woman's devoted affection to imagine that Jacob's mother was with her unhappy son while he gazed into the deep mysterious river, growing more solemn in its marvellous beauty as the sun gradually declined, and the sky became more and more overshadowed with gathering clouds.

In a little while Jacob's head became cooler. A deep fervent prayer escaped his lips, and lightened his overburdened heart.

Little we wot of the hot burning thoughts, of the strong emotions and feelings which may agitate the mind of a mere youth ! Jacob was eloquent in his distress, and if ever prayer was acceptable to Him, whose special providence is extended to the smallest creeping thing, that simple prayer of childhood was not unheeded.

Suddenly the boy thought he would return home. As this ray of repentance entered his soul, his good angel led him away. He staggered through the fields as one bewildered. He looked like a somnambulist. There was no speculation in his eyes. His feet wandered. The orchard and the garden flitted by him as if they were a panorama moved by hidden machinery. He was an automaton. He found his way without looking for it ; found his way over stile and brake, through gate and doorway, with his eyes looking into vacancy.

Jacob Martyn had not been missed. His bread and water were undisturbed. He slipped off his clothes, shivering from head to foot, and then burning like a fire, he crept into bed, his great eyes distended and flaming with the excitement of fever.

Hour after hour the iron tongue of the old church proclaimed the tardy flight of time; the solitary watchman paced the solitary street, and repeated the same solemn story, with an equally solemn description of the character of the night; but it was only when the sun returned from his long journey to light the Middleton factory girls to their looms, that poor Jacob closed his eyes, and became indifferent to the myriad sounds which heralded the day in the midland borough of this history.





CHAPTER III.


CHIEFLY TREATS OF THE DOMESTIC LIFE OF
THE TITSYS.

THE mother of Mr. Martyn's radiant factotum lived with her son in an alley near the old church, gaining an honest, if not a luxurious livelihood, by letting lodgings and taking in plain sewing.

It was a remarkable cottage that which the Titsys had made their home. It had evidently dropped from the clouds, or had been pitchforked from some other town into this particular corner of Middleton, and had only been saved from total destruction by a friendly stable, upon which it had ever since leaned for protection and support

The collision had made the stable stagger just a trifle, but it had shaken the cottage into a round bulbous lump of stone, and thatch, and steps, and window-sills, and lichens. You entered the cottage by a descent of round stone steps, which led to the "house-place," which in its turn led to the kitchen, and also to sundry mysterious bedrooms, up in the thatched roof, where a family of pigeons also boarded and lodged, and mingled their monotonous cooing with the equally monotonous chattering of a tribe of sparrows. The pigeons were Tom's particular pets. They comprised numerous varieties of the pigeon order—pouters, fantails, short-faced tumblers, and almost every other kind down to the commonplace Barbary runt. Tom was a trainer of birds, a dealer in birds, and a lover of birds. He seldom left home without a pocketful of pigeons, which he would release at intervals on his way to work, some on tumbling expeditions, and others on mercurial flights, bearing hieroglyphical billets to unknown countries.

The house-place, or living-room, of Mrs. Titsy's cottage was comfortably, though not elegantly, furnished. There was a delf-shelf shining with blue willow-pattern plates and green and coppery-gilt cups and saucers; a deal dresser as white as snow; a rickety linen press; a round oak table, with half-moon-shaped wings; an overgrown arm chair, so full of feathers that they had burst through two corners of the chintz covering; a bright old oak corner cupboard; a high mantel shelf, adorned with a pair of very bright figures illustrative of the loves of a green and white shepherd and a blue and white shepherdess; two chalk apples, and an equally honest artificial pear; with sundry other small items, surmounted on the wall by a vivid representation of Napoleon crossing the Alps. On a pair of wide brackets over the dresser was displayed an exceedingly fine tea-tray, upon which a very yellow lion was crouching at the feet of a radiant lady, who flourished in her red right hand an unusually large toasting-fork, all the while looking toasting-forks, and



daggers too, at a white cloud which seemed to threaten instant destruction to a ship sailing on a blue and golden sea. The walls were also decorated with the portrait of a murderer who was hanged at the county town ; a landscape excessively green and purple ; and the effigies of Tom and his mother, cut out in black paper and framed in black frames.

The Eve of this cottage-paradise was Mrs. Titsy, a blooming widow, who, with the assistance of a small annuity, eked out a tolerably comfortable livelihood by taking in plain sewing, and boarding and lodging one Horatio Johnson, a gentleman of somewhat eccentric habits—one of those out-of-the-way characters now fast disappearing from among us, but common enough thirty years ago in every country town. He was an herbalist, and had devoted many years to a blind sort of study of the application of herbs as remedial agents in cases of disease. He was versed in the flora of the district, and knew where every plant and herb that grew in the county were to be

found, and at what time of the year, though he only knew them by their English or local names. If a botanist had asked him for *milium effusum* he would have been utterly ignorant of the nature of the herb demanded ; but he would have recognised it by the appellation of millet-grass. This simple illustration of the kind of knowledge which he possessed will be as good as the dozen others which I might append. Mr. Johnson was a country herbalist, or herb doctor, experienced in the practical effects of certain herbs in certain cases, and holding a high reputation among the lower classes of the people.

There had been a time when he had dealt with cases as they arose, but the growing reputation of wonderful pills and potions, warranted to cure all diseases, compelled him in the way of business to introduce the celebrated " Oriental Herbal Pill," which, with certain accompanying draughts and mixtures varying with the nature of the maladies to be cured, was warranted to perform wonders in the heal-

ing way. Thousands of testimonials from old and young vouched for the value of the Oriental remedy, and such had become the demand for it that at the time when we make his acquaintance, Dr. Horatio Johnson had extended his operations from Middleton and found his reward in travelling from village to village, market town to market town, vending his medicines. His means had thus been so largely increased that he could afford to drive his own gig, and have a splendid awning over his stall in the Middleton market ; while on Sundays he comfortably smoked his pipe under his own vine and fig-tree, or without metaphor, in the cosey chimney-corner of Mrs. Titsy, widow.

The Doctor was moistening his clay one Sunday evening some thirty years ago as the parish bells were ringing for church. Mrs. Titsy had just gone forth in a shot-silk dress, a blue bonnet and gloves, and a very green and gold prayer-book (a present "from her dootiful son"). Now that she had passed through the sombre ordeal of

weeds for what she considered a reasonable period, Mrs. Titsy affected very gay colours. She had abolished, as a stupid prejudice, that distinctive mark of the dangerous classes, the widow's cap. If she had had any cause to remember the late Mr. Titsy with gratitude, she might have been less liberal in her interpretation of social laws and customs. Old Titsy had always treated her vilely when he was drunk ; and, as he was rarely sober, her life was anything but a pleasant one. As for Tom, he had grown so accustomed to his father's allowance of more kicks than halfpence, that for some little time after the allowance was stopped, Tom seemed quite unhappy. In good truth, he was miserable at the loss of the wicked father, and so in truth was Mrs. Titsy, although they would not deny the general verdict of the district that his death was "a happy release."

Mrs. Titsy may, therefore, be fairly forgiven for her glow of colour on this particular Sunday. Having for several years wrapped herself in the clouds and weeds of

widowhood, the relict of the late James Titsy thought herself fully entitled to don the rainbow.


The rainbow had just dawned upon the gaping street, and Tom and the philosophic lodger were left alone. Tom was studiously contemplating the ceiling, and the Doctor testing the capacity of his lungs by blowing forth a long-drawn-out volume of smoke, and watching it disperse.

“I tell you what it is, Tom,” said the Doctor, after making an unusually long wreath of smoke, which evidently gave him great satisfaction, “your respected master, or governor, or whatever other title you may recognise him by—if that influential individual would only listen to the words of prudence ; for all her paths are pleasantness, and the ways of life are uncertain—if your master made prudence his guide, he would, as my circulars admirably express it, ‘save doctors’ fees and try the Oriental remedy.’ ”

“Now, don’t joke about it, don’t, Mester

Johnson, 'cos he's really very bad, poor little chap," said Tom.

"If a man deceive thee once, it is his fault; if he deceive thee a second time, it is thine own," was Mr. Johnson's reply. "Read the testimonials from all classes of suffering humanity, and be on your guard against spurious imitations—*moniti meliora sequamur*, as it is writ down in Virgil. It is all the Latin I know, except some of the dog-latin of the fancy herbalist; it cost me several nights to commit it to memory, Tom; translated, it means 'being admonished, let us follow better things.' I find it an admirable conclusion to my professional perorations; while it puzzles the crowd, it gives undoubted evidence of my learning. A scrap of Latin is to the orator what the gilded cup and the double-bottomed box is to the juggler; it is the gold of the wise man, the equally effective tinsel of the clever man, and who shall say whether it is better to be clever or wise? But no matter; let us revert to the glorious motto—*moniti meliora sequamur*."



The Doctor was rushing into one of the orations which he usually addressed to his assembled clients in the market-place, and was waiving his hand in majestic accompaniment to every sentence, when it suddenly occurred to him that, after all, this might not be the best mode of impressing Tom. In order to gain time for weighing the thought and adjudicating upon it, he took a long pull at his pipe, and shortly expelled so tremendous a cloud of smoke towards Tom, that Mr. Martyn's factotum was for the moment quite eclipsed ; indeed, the robust yet gentle Mercury looked like a member of one of those peep-show bands of warriors who are perpetually thrusting forth military arms or plumed heads from the midst of clouds of smoke which never disperse, and behind which the battle is supposed to be raging with intense fury. The difference between Tom and the peep-show was certainly an important one. Tom did come out of his clouds, or rather the Doctor's clouds, to speak correctly ; and when he was once more visible, he said—

"If I thought thou really meant what thou said, Dr. Johnson, I would ask mother to get thy stuff a trial."

"Stuff!" said the Doctor, with a disparaging nod.

"Beg pardon, Doctor; I meant no offence. The Oriental is what I was driving at. Now don't deceive me, tell me the right down out and out truth. Give me your word on it, and I'll believe."

"Nothing that is true can ever die," began the Doctor. "Now, in a certain sense, the philosopher who said that is right, and in a certain sense he is wrong," continued Horatio, looking hard at a smoke ring which was coming to grief against the green and white shepherd. "I am true, Tom, and yet I shall die; thou art true, Tom, and thou wilt die. Still, the maxim is good, and demands our highest respect. Now, truth, as embodied in the Oriental, will never die; and the Oriental, with an accompanying prescription, is a cure for those whose time has not arrived. Master Jacob, being young, the chances

are ten to one that his time has not yet come, and that if the doctors would let him alone, and give nature a chance, nature would do her duty by the youth and perform a cure. Nature! Blessed nature! There is no doctor like nature, no nurse like nature. Nature has antidotes. The Oriental is the secret antidote for wind in the stomach, spasms, giddiness, disturbed sleep, palpitation of the heart, colic, jaundice, gout, dropsy, sore throat, palsy, and, as the Immortal Bard himself puts it, all the other ills that flesh is heir to. He said something else," continued the herb doctor, rising from his chair, and solemnly sawing the air with his pipe; "he said something else. What else, what else, my friends and fellow-countrymen, did that mighty poet say? You don't know. Then be enlightened; listen to the glorious words. 'Throw physic to the dogs.' That is what the greatest of all poets, the greatest of all philosophers, the greatest of all great men, said—'Throw physic to the dogs;' at the same time intimating in equally emphatic

language that he would have none of it. Away with it, he said; away with the draughts and powders, the nauseous potions and mixtures, and poisonous pills with which the faculty purge and torture and kill you; away to the dogs with such physic; Shakespeare would have none of it, and we will have none of it, my friends. The Oriental remedy, extracted from the choicest herbs, was not discovered in Shakespeare's time, or William—I call him William because I love him; I am always familiar with those I love and admire—I say, if the Oriental had been discovered in his time, if it had been known to mankind when the greatest of mankind said, 'Throw physic to the dogs,' the greatest of mankind would most certainly have added to that never-to-be-forgotten exclamation a few other remarkable words—probably to this effect: 'Throw physic to the dogs; and, having done so, try Dr. Horatio Johnson's celebrated Oriental Pill, only sixpence a box, or six boxes for half-a-crown. *Moniti meliora sequamur!*'"

There is no knowing whether the Doctor had really finished his address or not when he was interrupted by a visitor. The speaker had unconsciously glided into a professional oration, and had so warmed with his subject, that, in the fruitfulness of his imagination, he had turned the little room into a market-place, and the chairs, and tables, and pots, and pans, and pictures, and Tom, into a great crowd, with ears only for the eloquence, and throats only for the pills of Horatio Johnson. Tom had long since subsided into a dreamy reverie upon the beauty of the lady on the tea-tray, and the ferocity of the lion at her feet, mingled with a certain admiration of the Doctor's eloquence, which was the pride and wonder of a large majority of the people of Middleton-in-the-Water.

The oration was brought to an end through a knock at the door, which said knock was followed by the immediate appearance of two visitors. The first was a young man, dressed in a suit of black that had been brushed and cleaned until it was

threadbare at those particular places where the wearer's bones were most angular and obtrusive. It was difficult to say whether the owner of the suit was young or old, but the conclusion which you would arrive at after some consideration would be in favour of the more youthful side of the question. He was a thin, sallow man, with lank black hair combed carefully behind his ears. His eyes were small and piercing; they glittered in a pair of bony caverns, and looked at you when you thought they were looking in another direction.

This interesting gentleman was Mr. Julius Jennings, confidential clerk in the house of Mr. Alfred Martyn. His companion was an entirely different specimen of humanity; so different, that your first feeling on meeting the two would have been one of surprise at the association of such dissimilar beings. Silas Collinson was a young farmer, an honest, manly-looking son of the soil, with brown curly hair, and brown curly whiskers, and a brown

velvet shooting-coat to match. He was a pleasant, happy-looking fellow, with prosperity written on his forehead, and the faint shadow of speculation hovering about his legs, which were just a trifle horsey ; not horsey in the agricultural sense alone, but horsey from the turfite's point of view. If a glance at his narrow black trousers did not make you feel sure that they had been at Epsom and Doncaster, the gold horseshoe pin in the blue and spotted neckerchief would have convinced you. This gave to the rural and agricultural character of the man just a sufficient dash of the town and the ring to make him seem sprightlier and more knowing than the ordinary farmer ; and herein you would have found the only bit of reason for his association with Julius Jennings ; for what is called sporting brings a man into strange companionship. Mr. Collinson was the proprietor of a small freehold farm, pleasantly situated on the outskirts of Middleton.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said Horatio Johnson, extending a hand to each.

Tom gave them a somewhat gloomy greeting. His face smiled in spite of himself, but there was no cheerfulness in his voice ; his heart was in the sick-room of Jacob Martyn, at least so much of his heart as was not in the unwilling possession of Susan Harley.

"I thought you always went to chapel on Sundays, Mr. Jennings," said the Doctor.

"Yes," said Jennings, "I think I have not missed for a twelvemonth before."

"Dear me, very remarkable ; surely the day should be held in remembrance that marks so extraordinary a breach of custom," said the Doctor.

"Mr. Collinson is going to leave us soon, you see, and he wanted a stroll. I could not refuse him, notwithstanding my respect for the Decalogue."

"Not a pleasant night for a stroll, either," said the Doctor, poking the fire ; "quite a November wind getting up."

"Don't you like the wind ?" asked Collinson, answering the question in the same

breath. "Nothing like a good breeze ; blows the cobwebs out of your mind, and out of the air too, ventilates the earth, wakens up your faulty fastenings, and reminds you of bits of mendings to be done at gates and doors ; nothing like a bit of wind, Doctor !"

"For those who are strong and hearty and active as you are, Mr. Collinson, true for you, sir, true for you. Hope you will have a fair wind and a pleasant journey when you cross the Atlantic."

"Ah, I'm with you there, Doctor."

"When do you sail ?"

"Next week, my friend, next week. Time flies fast ; if it went a bit slower, I think I should change my mind."

"Indeed ?" said Johnson inquiringly.

"Yes, a sneaking sort of kindness for home seems to come over me, and I've had uncommonly unhappy thoughts at night about the journey, almost as bad as if I were being turned out of the old country, instead of just going on a business trip that may, or may not, lead to

my going there for good some day; but only if I can make a lot more money there than is to be had here; that's all, Doctor."

"Ah, well," observed Johnson, "there's nothing like making money when you're young, though money may be bought too dearly. After all, America is a long way to go for money, and the sea's as treacherous as—as—as the sea, for there's nothing more treacherous."

"Not a woman?" interposed Jennings, glancing at Tom, who sat looking into the fire as if he were paying no attention to the conversation.

"No, not a woman, Mr. Jennings, and not a man neither, and not a rigid respecter of the Decalogue neither," said the Doctor.

"If you intend to be personal, Doctor Horatio Johnson," with strong italics on the word Doctor; "I forgive you for the sake of the day."

"Thank you, Julius, thank you, and thank the day very much."

"Come, none of this," said Mr. Collinson, laughing, "have a pinch of snuff: here, clear your daylights a little."

"Oh, don't be alarmed, sir, we don't quarrel; Mr. Julius and I understand each other; we always have a playful spar when we meet."

"Certainly," said Julius, taking a pinch from Collinson's box, and squeezing it very tightly between his fingers.

"Only a complimentary box, eh?" said the Doctor, examining the pretty little silver box that Collinson handed to him; "I thought you were not a snuffer; horrid habit, bad in every way; but a snuff-box is a useful thing; helps to smooth differences, eh, Mr. Jennings? You will be sorry to part with Mr. Collinson."

"Very," said Jennings.

"When is your last night in England then?" asked the Doctor, turning to the young farmer.

"This very night," said Collinson; "I go to Liverpool in the morning. Mrs. Titsy is gone to church, I suppose?"

"Yes ; but it is not Mrs. Titsy whom you would wish more particularly to inquire about, eh, my friend ? There, we know all about it ; don't be angry or think I am inquisitive. Susan Harley generally spends her Sundays here, but she has not been with us to-day. Young Martyn is very ill, and like a kind good soul, no doubt she is nursing the boy ; but she is sure to come before the night is out. Sit down, sir, and have a taste of the fragrant weed—just one pipe."

"We cannot stay, thank you," said Jennings.

"Can't we, indeed ?" asked the Doctor.

"No, thank you," said Collinson, "we have a little appointment presently, but I don't expect to be late, and I do want to see Miss Harley, Doctor—Miss Harley, mind you."

"Certainly," said the Doctor, "by all means ; nobody respects her more than I do."

"That's all right," said the farmer ; "I will call here again before the night is

over. She said she would be in about this time ; so you see she expects me."

Although Tom Titsy's thoughts were occupied with Jacob's illness, he possessed sufficient of the receptive faculty to lose little or nothing of the conversation between Horatio and Mr. Collinson, the close of which considerably reduced the natural gaiety of Tom's countenance. He had no claim whatever upon Susan's special regard, but he had in his blundering way exhibited a kindness for her which was not mistaken by the Titsy household.

"Then it is not to be good-bye until we see you again?"

"No; I shall look in before the watchman begins to try the doors, and thinks it time for you to go to bed."

"I will say good night," said Jennings, shuffling towards the Doctor, and offering a flabby hand.

"The same to you, and many of them," said the Doctor, taking the hand for a moment. "Let me see what is the day of the month, November 15; it deserves our

remembrance, the Sunday on which you gave up the evening meeting to oblige a secular friend. If the world comes to an end before morning, or some other startling manifestation is made, we shall know the reason."

There came over the sallow face of Julius Jennings a strange expression as the Doctor marked the calendar that hung near the shepherdess on the mantelpiece; an expression indicating both annoyance and fear.

"Don't you like my marking the date, Mr. Jennings? You think I am sarcastic, eh?"

"Not so sarcastic, nor so humorous, Johnson, as when you are thrusting the universal remedy down the public throat," said Jennings, rubbing his mittened hands.

"Good: one to Jennings," said the Doctor. "I wonder which of us two is the biggest quack—you with your moral and religious pills, or me with my bits of herbs rolled into little lumps?"

"Having your altercations again," said Collinson, smiling.

"No, having Jennings," said the Doctor, laughing and resuming his seat by the fire. "Good-bye for the present, gentlemen, good-bye."

"I hate that sneak," remarked the Doctor, refilling his pipe and pressing the tobacco into the bowl with more than usual energy; "he is a canting, sneaking, malicious, plotting scoundrel, or I am a Dutchman, which I certainly am not: it bodes no good to Mr. Silas Collinson when Julius Jennings gives up his chapel for him. It is a strange thing to me how Magar the Miller and Jennings the Saint can be so intimate, and stranger that an honest fellow like Collinson should be mixed up with two such men. Well, there is no accounting for taste, is there, Tom?"

"No," responded Tom, still looking into the fire.

"For your part you don't think much of Collinson?"

"I don't," said Tom, shifting his position and facing the philosophic Johnson.

"Never mind, lad, the best man will

win at last; I know where the shoe pinches; you must grin and bear it like a man."

"Well, Doctor, the shoe that pinches most is Master Jacob's being ill," said Tom.

At this the Doctor became silent again, and more regardful of his pipe. He made a succession of smoke rings, which floated up among the chimney ornaments and obscured for a time the pencil mark under "November 15" in the calendar. Ominous date! how ominous the reader will discover sooner than Mrs. Titsy's talkative lodger, who had noted it and dragged it from oblivion in the Titsy household. November 15th! It stood out like a warning—it was a warning; it was a guide marked out by an all-wise, all-seeing Providence for a clue in the darkness that was coming on. It is not difficult to believe that the pencil mark made by Horatio Johnson had been ordained.

While the Doctor went on making smoke rings the cooing of a stray pigeon

reminded Tom that the whole of his feathered family should have been in bed long ago. He went to the door and released a fantail which he had pocketed in an absent frame of mind two hours previously, and subsided again into a calm contemplation of the fire ; not that his imagination led to his seeing streets and castles, and trees and rocks in the cinders ; he saw nothing but the hot coals which were making his face ten shades redder than usual.

It was only when the door opened and Cæsar came plunging headlong down the steps that Tom shook off his unwonted lethargy, and this was not so much out of regard for the dog as for Susan Harley, who followed Cæsar (with more ceremony than was considered necessary by that excited quadruped) into the cottage.


“ Well, Susan, my lass,” said Tom, “ how are you ? we’ve been expecting you ; and how is the little governor ? ”

“ Better, Tom, a little better, thank you,” said Susan.

"That is good news for Tom," said the Doctor. "Pray sit down, Mrs. Titsy will be here almost immediately."

Mrs. Titsy arrived before the Doctor had done speaking. The two women kissed each other and cast mutual glances at their Sunday clothes, and then went upstairs to take their bonnets off and have a little private gossip ; after which they came down and Susan assisted Mrs. Titsy to prepare the supper. As soon as this frugal meal was ready the Doctor took his seat at one end of the table and Mrs. Titsy at the other, and Susan sat on one side and Tom on the other, and they were a very happy family indeed.

After supper the Doctor returned to his pipe ; and tumblers and hot water were brought forth. The Doctor had a steaming glass of grog, and Mrs. Titsy had a glass, and Tom had a glass, as was the custom on Sunday evenings ; but Susan could not be prevailed upon to drink. She would only just have a sip, and at Tom's suggestion she consented to sip out of his




glass, which made Tom very happy indeed—as happy as a great gentleman might feel at any act of condescension from a great lady for whom he might have the highest possible admiration. Tom was continually passing his glass to Susan, who only wetted her lips; while he only sipped again, that Susan might wet her lips the oftener.

Mr. Horatio Johnson having given Col-linson's message to Susan, soon after her arrival, they were in momentary expectation of the young farmer's re-appearance, but he did not come. Susan began to think he was annoyed that she had not kept her appointment. It made her miserable every now and then when this thought crossed her mind, like an ugly flash of doubt doing violence to her new budding love for the man who had given a man's best evidence of his affection for her. At length a step was heard, and a hand moved the latch; but it was the watchman whose visit Silas had promised to anticipate. "All right?" in-

quired the watchman. "All right," responded Tom, whereupon the footstep passed the cottage and died away in the distance.

"It is getting very late," said Susan. "I must really go; I am going to sit up with Jacob and I promised not to stay away long."

Susan had several times announced that indeed she really must go, and at last she got up and put her things on; whereupon Tom said it was so late that he must see Susan home. Susan struggled hard against Tom's proposition. She could go very well alone, she was not afraid; besides she could take Cæsar with her for that matter. But nothing would satisfy Tom, who persevered with an energy which would have stood him in good stead at the printing office if he could have commanded it in the cause of type-setting. Well then, he should go to the bottom of the street with her and not a step farther. Tom accepted the compromise, and his mother and the Doc-



tor looked pleased at the young man's triumph.

In less than half an hour Tom returned out of breath, with despair in his face, and despair in his voice. His mother was wanted down at the Governor's immediately—"little Jacob was dying!"





CHAPTER IV.

“NOVEMBER 15.”



MIDDLETON-IN-THE-WATER was the most benighted town in the Midland Counties. Even by Middletonians themselves it was acknowledged to be quite a hundred years in the rear of every modern social and national improvement. No matter how liberally Time scattered his seeds of progress, while winging his way over the ancient borough, they rarely took root; and if they did the result was some miserable deformed weakly product that could never be recognised for any plant associated with progress or advancement. Whether the utter failure of the sowing might be ac-



counted for by reason of the adamantine quality of the paving stones of the period is a question which only requires proposing to the local debating club to be duly accepted and discussed.

The old town was a gigantic puzzle which nobody but the letter-carrier could solve. It was one mass of crooked streets and alleys which led to everywhere and nowhere, and seemed to have been planned for the especial purpose of confusing strangers, supplying covering galleries for thieves, and courting-corners for lovers. The houses were built of bricks which had once been red. Nearly every house had bow windows and door-steps. The latter were continually undergoing the process of scouring at the hands of women who had once been red like the bricks and the tiles.

A cloud usually hung over the borough, a cloud of sooty smoke from tall chimneys, which all day long sent forth volumes of the dunnest vapour. Except when the wind chased it over the hills, the smoke never left the town. Every day it gradually

mounted up above the roofs, and then, quietly descending, it dispersed itself through every street and billeted itself for the night in the narrowest thoroughfares.

In many quarters of Middleton the houses looked as though they had crept together for mutual warmth during some terribly fierce winter in the old old days, and had been fixed there by icy bonds which had never since been melted. In other districts huge habitations reared themselves up in the smoke and looked down with uncompromising contempt out of their top windows upon half-thatched cottages below. There was a general air of squalid grandeur and pride, mingled with squalid poverty and fear, throughout the place. It was a town of vulgar bullying creditors and poor vulgar grovelling debtors, going on from day to day living close together, bullying and being bullied, grinding and being ground, cursing and being cursed.

Yet this miserable Middleton was fixed in a glorious setting of hills and dales, and woods and rivers ; a setting the rarest and

most beautiful that can be imagined ; it was like a spurious stone in the setting of a rare gem. There had been days in the olden times when the divine light may have shone out full and brilliant in the now dimmed and flawed stone ; indeed it must have been so, the origin of anything so fairly set could not have been ignoble. On summer days you would have thought the sunbeams were charged with the mission of restoring the ancient glory of the town, and that the mission was too difficult for accomplishment. The sunbeams would wander through the gabled streets, lingering here, darting off there, tarrying in this spot and shunning the other, until, weary of the pestering smoke-grimed, factory-ridden, money-grubbing place, they returned to the realms of light, leaving for a moment a parting ray of golden splendour on the vane of the old church steeple.

There had been no sunbeams visible in Middleton on this Sunday of our story. It was a dull leaden November day, not wet, not foggy for a wonder, but simply a gloomy

autumn day, which was succeeded by an equally gloomy night. It was therefore a cheery thing to see the broad glint of fire-light that came out of the little parlour of "The Angel," as Julius Jennings and Silas Collinson entered that hostelry. It was a back parlour, a dark heavy parlour, despite a large quantity of bow-window looking upon the town. The curtains had just been drawn, and visitors were evidently expected.

"Is this our room?" asked Jennings, of the waiting-woman.

"It is," she said; "what will you please to take?"

Jennings looked at Collinson, plainly intimating that if he consented to enter a public-house on a Sunday, it did not at all follow that he should drink.

"I will have some brandy hot," said Collinson; "Mr. Jennings will give his own order."

"Nothing for me, thank you," said Jennings.

"You must drink, man," said Silas, "if it is only for the good of the house."

"Well then, for the good of the house," Jennings replied, "for I really don't care about anything ; for the good of the house I will take a little rum shrub."

"And I will take some Scotch whisky," said a rough voice at the door.

The rough voice introduced its rough and ready owner, Mr. Ephraim Magar, a thick-set, square-headed, low-browed man, who assumed the character of a jovial, plain-spoken citizen of the world. But there was a cunning expression in his small grey eyes, and a heavy 'sensual cut about his lower jaw and his bulging neck, which did not quite correspond with the part he wished to play. He looked the genial character of his intentions perhaps less successfully than usual when dressed in his Sunday clothes.

Ephraim Magar was the miller whom Jacob Martyn had observed smoking his pipe by the mill-pool in Jacob's great trouble. Viewed from a distance, whitened with flour dust, and supported by an old mill and a pleasant bit of meadow for a back-

ground, Mr. Magar might have been accepted as something akin to the jolly miller to whom in the song Henry the Eighth doffed his hat during a romantic comparison of the positions of king and subject ; but in his Sunday face and coat, Mr. Magar certainly did not look like the jolly miller of the Dee.

Perhaps there never was a more mysterious mill than that of which Mr. Ephraim Magar was proprietor. If ruin, and thatch, and lichens, and weeds, and shady corners, could make it more picturesque than that famous mill in Wales which every artist paints, Magar's mill decidedly carried off the palm. It had not a rocky romantic river to set it off, that is true ; but it had a calm lake margined with weeds ; and it had an old wooden wheel with plenty of colour in it, colour of rust and age and slimy moss.

Any time for twenty years the mill was going to be pulled down, to be replaced by a more useful building, but latterly Mr. Magar had told the landlord that it answered

his purpose very well. What his purpose was the gossips were continually trying to discover. It was clearly not the simple business of a miller ; his purpose was considerably deeper than that. He made more money in buying at the turn of the market at Wakefield and selling again than he made by the turn of the mill-stones. The old wheel was continually going it is true, and there was flour to be had at the mill. Suspicions of distilling had been aroused by some imaginative neighbour who thought the miller's late hours, coupled with lights at midnight and early morning, meant distilling. The Inland Revenue officers searched the mill and had to defend an action at law for their pains, to say nothing of being threatened with the mill-pool. Magar stood no nonsense from any one ; what he could not do in the way of defence and attack by a foul tongue and a strong arm he did by means of Mr. Grippe, a local attorney, who had punished several and sundry persons who had brought themselves within the miller's power.

It was known to Julius Jennings, and also to Mr. Silas Collinson, that Magar had lost a large sum of money at a certain gaming-table in a neighbouring town. Jennings had lent Magar money, and Collinson had lent money to both. Moreover, Magar had bought corn, as well as sheep, from Collinson at the turn of the market and at other times, and there was a balance in Magar's books of four hundred pounds still owing to Collinson. The miller had promised to pay this sum over to the young farmer a month ago, and on failing to do so at that time, had mentioned seven days afterwards, and failing seven days afterwards had fixed Saturday, and then had solemnly named Sunday evening, this very Sunday evening of our story. He had arranged to meet Jennings and Collinson for a final settlement and a farewell glass at "The Angel;" and here they were, all friends together, on this memorable and never-to-be-forgotten Fifteenth of November.

"And when do you sail, Collinson?"

asked Magar when the grog was brewed and the shutters closed.

"I am due in Liverpool to-morrow," said Collinson, "and I sail on Wednesday."

"What about Miss Susan Harley?" asked Jennings, sipping his shrub and looking at Magar.

"Susan! well, poor girl, she does not know what to say; she does not like the notion of my going, of course."

"Wavering, perhaps," said Jennings slowly and with a deprecatory glance at Silas, "wavering between Thomas Titsy and yourself. What a rival! And Mister Collinson might marry the richest trader's daughter in Middleton."

"That will do, Jennings, I did not come here to talk about my matrimonial prospects; and if I did, what is the richest girl in the town to me—riches don't mean happiness, I suppose?"

"Don't they?" said Magar stirring his whisky and stretching his ungainly legs; "then what is happiness?"

"I can't exactly say, but I would sooner make the money myself than have it with a wife," said Silas.

"You are sweet on Susan, I know—a decent sort of a wench, but you may have a woman of that class to keep your house without all the fuss and bother of a wedding, Silas."

"Ah, I've heard of your ideas on this subject before; and there is a certain woman whom some folk know, that is aware of them practically," said Silas.

"That's one to you," said Magar. "One to Silas. Eh, Mr. Jennings?"

"Yes," said Jennings.

"That's glasses round," said Magar, ringing the bell.

Jennings no longer attempted to resist the generous liquor. Magar had a double quantity of whisky in each glass, and seemed inclined to grow quarrelsome over it.

"So you mean to marry that servant of Martyn's?" he said in a patronising manner to Collinson, who was annoyed at this continual reference to Susan.

"Look here, my friends," he replied, "as I said before, I did not come here to discuss marriage, but money; and not money in connection with marriage, but money owing to me in the way of trade. I came here at your invitation to do business, although it is the Sabbath, and Mr. Julius Jennings is a regular chapel-goer."

"The Lord plucked ears of wheat on the Sabbath, friend Silas," said Jennings in a soft tone of injured innocence.

"Oh, burn your texts!" exclaimed Collinson, "I'd as lief hear the devil quote the Scriptures as Julius Jennings; so you have got out that bit of my mind. I told you a year ago that I had no faith in your religion, Julius."

"That was when you were angry, as you are now," said Jennings with an air of calm superiority, "and when you are angry it is the evil one who speaks, and not you yourself, Mr. Collinson—not you, sir, not you."

"Then where is the religion of calling a business meeting, a sort of twopenny-half-

penny insolvent debtors' court, on a Sunday night?" exclaimed Silas, clenching his hand and looking angrily at Magar, who rose with a flash of fury in his face.

"Insolvent debtors!" roared Magar, glaring at Silas, "where are they? What dost mean? Who do you mean?"

Jennings slid his thin writhing body between his two friends, keeping them apart by word and gesture.

"Gentlemen!—gentlemen!—my friends!—Mr. Magar, sir!—Sunday night! Pray remember. And Silas Collinson's last night in England!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Magar, "there you hit me, Jennings—his last night in England. But what the devil does Silas mean by insolvent debtors?"

"Now look here, Magar, and you Jennings," said Collinson, his anger subsiding immediately upon Magar's reference to his last night in England, "I don't want to quarrel; I did not mean to be offensive; I was hasty; I apologise; there! Come, let us be friends. There's my hand."

Magar took the proffered hand, while Jennings grasped the other, and then they pledged each other's health, and Magar proposed that they should "get to business."

"I should not have asked thee to come here to-night, Silas," began Mr. Magar, "only I received a bit of money yesterday which I ought to have had before, and I wanted to keep my promise as close on the time I named as I could, and as you were going off to-morrow, I thought it best to do it to-night. Besides, I am going to Birmingham in the morning, and I don't want to be tempted to risk it there."

"Why don't you keep a banking account?" asked Collinson; "I have often wondered that you do not."

"Oh, I should never get on with a banking account," said Magar; "I should do nothing but sign cheques; I should never think I was short of money. Besides, banks break, and my mill is as safe as any bank. I did keep a banking account once, for about a month, but I didn't like it. Now to business. Look here. I shall pay thee

two hundred pounds down, and give a bill at six months for the balance. There's the money in bank notes, and we'll walk down to the mill presently, and Jennings will draw up a receipt and a bill. Will that do?"

"Yes," said Collinson, "I am perfectly satisfied; two hundred in cash will suit me very well, and I can leave the bill at the bank."

"I owe you a trifle, Silas," said Jennings.

"Never mind, Jennings," Collinson replied promptly; "say no more about that; we will talk about it when I come back."

"There, man, put the money in your pocket," said Magar, pushing the notes over to Collinson, "and let us have another glass a-piece before we walk down to the mill."

"Thank you, Magar," responded Collinson. "All right; let us start at once, it is getting late."

The last round of grog was soon finished, and Collinson, who had despaired of getting any money at all, was very talkative and friendly. The brandy, too, had begun to

tell upon him. He walked a little unsteadily.

It was a dark night. There were a few stars twinkling in the blackness, and some dozen houses sent forth gleams of light from bedroom windows. The Middleton Corporation, who had only introduced gas into the town a few years previous to this history, took Old Moore for their guide in the matter of illumination. When the almanac promised moonshine, which it did very frequently, the Corporation saved their gas. Middleton was therefore in total darkness once or twice a week, as it was upon this occasion. To make the night more objectionable, November began to assert its title, not only to be dull and dark, but to be drizzly and windy and cold. Before Magar and his friends had arrived at the mill the rain began to fall, accompanied by a hollow soughing, melancholy gusty wind, with a howl in it at street corners, and a moan here and there in dark alleys and mysterious passages.

The mill, as the reader will readily under-

stand, was a weird, solemn place at night, and especially in November, when the rain had swollen the pool, and the wind wandered about among the naked trees and made a low moaning music that deepened into a sigh as the river carried it gurgling and sobbing under the mill-wheel.

While they stood upon the threshold of the mill a light from a half-concealed window near the wheel glimmered upon the wet slimy ladders.

Magar cursed the light, and said he thought he had put it out before he left. In the same breath he asked Collinson why the devil he did not walk straight, and if he wanted to tumble into the pool. Silas laughed, and said he would rather tumble into bed. It was the peculiarity of Collinson to be particularly merry in his cups ; while an extra glass brought out the brutal nature of Magar and the canting hypocrisy of Jennings.

By-and-by the door closed upon the three friends. The light disappeared and came forth again in another part of the mill.

The wind swept along the adjacent river and wandered round the mill, and threw the drizzling rain upon the dusty windows. The water trickling through the locks of the pool, slipped away to the river beneath the silent wheel, and the time slipped away also ; the hours, half hours, and quarters being steadily marked by the local chimes, the sounds of which wandered through the November air down to the old bridge as if to keep the watchman company at the last and loneliest portion of his rounds.

Magar's Mill was the boundary of the watchman's beat ; but the officer was generally content to cry the hour on the bridge, unless anything called his especial attention to the mill. On this Sunday night of the fifteenth of November he heard a door closed and saw a light ; thereupon he passed along the bridge, and casting a long column of light before him, went to the mill and tapped at the door with the same interrogatory remark as that which had interrupted the Titsys only half an hour before. " All right ?" said the watchman.

“All right,” was the immediate response from within.

“Humph !” said the watchman as he left the spot ; “in a great hurry to say all right ; might have asked a fellow to have a drink on a night like this ; a fine sight of money that man must be making one way and another. He’s always at it, Sundays and work-a-days. What’s he up to now ? Well, it’s no business of mine. I’ll just go home for a quarter of an hour and warm mysen. ‘Twelve o’clock and a stormy night !’ ”

The watchman’s cry fell dead and still and unheeded upon the darkness ; the wind did not even carry it away as it swept over the bridge ; it fell heavily, as if it had sunk into the river. The town clock soon afterwards began to strike out the hour, but it seemed to make a fitful ending after the first three strokes of the bell, and November took possession of the town and did as it liked with it, covering it up with sleet and drizzle, and making low, wailing, and terrifying noises up and down the streets.

A Middletonian who had been visiting his friends in a village, beyond the bridge, on the London road, was passing the mill shortly after twelve o'clock, and was attracted by the shifting of a light from one part of the mill to another. Having heard the story of the supposed illicit still, he paused a moment near the old building, and thought he heard a groan, as if from some person in pain. The noise frightened him for a moment, but he put it down to the cry of an owl or the sighing of the wind. The same sound was presently repeated, and there was something so solemn and ghost-like about the place, it was such a wretched November night, and his wife would be so angry at his staying out late, that the Middletonian hurried away from the mill and over the bridge into the town, and was very glad when he saw the light of his own fireside. Moreover, the poor fellow had bethought himself of one of the many legends of the bridge, where a murder had been perpetrated in the days of Jack Sheppard, and he terrified his wife by repeating that story,

and wondering if the ghost of the murdered man had haunted the bridge on this miserable November night.

The watchman had hardly reached his home, and the Middletonian had only just brewed himself a nightcap when the door at the back of the mill was cautiously unlocked and opened. In another minute Julius Jennings peered out into the darkness and listened. He heard nothing but the water gurgling down the weir to the river. Five minutes afterwards a dreadful cry broke out upon the night, a cry of despair and death, a cry that trembled in the air. The very wind stopped as if to listen, and the river carried the awful sound down to the bridge and lost it among the dark arches. Time seemed to stand still for a moment, as if the night had received a sudden shock ; and then the wind gathered strength, and rushed at the mill as if it were about to drag forth the heart of its mystery. It shook the doors, and broke in upon a half-open window. It came back again and plunged beneath the water-wheel, and then

rushed over the mill-pool and shook every reed upon the banks ; but nothing came of all this demonstration except the creaking of doors, the rattling of windows, the hissing of water, and the rustling of reeds and sedges. No other cry came from the mill ; all was still and quiet, and silent, and solemn as if death had really been in that despairing shriek, and was now in gloomy possession of a victim.

At two o'clock in the morning the old borough watchman appeared again. He cast the same long column of light before him : it was like a luminous elastic wand ; it struck the front of the mill, and then mounted the roof, increasing its proportions as it moved upwards until it changed from an elastic wand into a spectre.

"Past two o'clock and a cloudy morning," sang the watchman. As he turned away, the bull's-eye spectre came back over the mill-roof, down the front, and stretched away again towards the bridge. "Past two o'clock and a cloudy morning," again sang the watchman, as if he desired in this

dreadful solitude the companionship of his own voice.

Daylight dawned at last, ragged and patchy, cold and wet and chilly. The first glimmer of morning saw Julius Jennings creeping into bed, while daylight fell upon Mr. Ephraim Magar standing with his arms folded at the mill-door.

"Good morning, sir ; not a very inviting morning, sir," said Tom Titsy.

"No ; it ain't," said Magar. "You are out early."


"Same to you, sir," said Tom.

"Them as thrives must be up betimes, Tom," said Magar, with calm self-possession.

"And stop up at nights, too," said Tom, noticing the miller's haggard and wild appearance.

"Take that dog away," said Magar.

"Oh ! he won't hurt, sir ; he don't mean nothing," said Tom, pretending to lash Cæsar with a light stick, which he carried for the purpose of intimidation rather than correction.



Cæsar had snarled at Magar, and the miller had resented the dog's sullen recognition.

"It would be the worse for him if he did mean anything," said Magar. "I'd smash him."

"Well, I don't know whether you would, for that matter," said Tom. "But there's no need to be angry. Come along, Cæsar, come along! Mr. Magar's been up late, and got out of bed the wrong side."

The dog barked and leaped up at Tom, and the pair went bounding on together.

"Has he?" said Magar. "I'll be even with you, Thomas Titsy, some day."

"Past six o'clock, and a cloudy morning," said the watchman in the distance.





CHAPTER V.

COMING TO LIFE AGAIN.

THAT autumn day and night of the preceding chapter had been the introduction to many weeks of cold and biting winter weather.

Keen northerly winds had dried up the earth, until it rang with the tread of ordinary boots, and re-echoed the clatter of horses. Middleton groaned under the long frost which pinched the poor, and filled the streets with unemployed bricklayers, gardeners, and canal boatmen, who howled forth lugubrious complaints in monotonous protests against winter and wealth. The river which had carried down to the bridge that terrible cry in the November night

was frozen hard and fast, and the mill-pool was covered with skaters. People went about shrugging their shoulders, rubbing their hands, and puffing out their cheeks. Those who had jolly fires and well-filled tables said it was good old-fashioned weather, delightful weather, seasonable weather. Mr. Ephraim Magar said this ; but he said more—he declared that the poor ought to be specially cared for at such times. He set the excellent example of opening a public soup-kitchen, over which he presided, and for which he was duly praised, and puffed, and lauded in the local newspaper.

Like the longest lane and the greatest trouble, the bitterest winter comes to an end. This winter which was so hard upon Middleton had its last day. One morning the dull cold earth was awakened into life again. The river flowed on once more. The birds got up early and told each other that spring was coming. The boatmen unmoored their barges. The gardeners looked up their spades. The bricklayers hammered their melted mortar into plastic

heaps, and resumed their storeys which had been left "to be continued" for many weary weeks. The whole world was coming to life again, and with it our little friend, Jacob Martyn. He was lying where we left him after his mad ramble by the mill-pool; he was lying where he had been lying all through the autumn and the winter; but at last he was coming out of his long illness.

It was early morning. The white curtains of Jacob's little room were warm with the tints of the rising sun. A tea-cup and saucer standing near the bed, in the full radiance of the morning light, looked to Jacob like some wonderful trophies of Chinaland. There was a small collection of medicine bottles on the dressing-table, and a few smouldering cinders in the fire-grate. The mantel-shelf was decorated with an apple, half an orange; a wine-glass, a packet of sweetmeats, a jelly-mould, and a variety of other sick-room trifles, and the atmosphere of the room was heavy with the perfumes thereof.

Jacob was bewildered as he gazed upon all these things. He tried to remember what had happened, what time it was, when it was, how it was, who he was, where he was. He cudgelled his brains with a variety of strange conceits, until he sank exhausted on the pillow where he had lain for so many months—we cannot say weary months, so far as Jacob was concerned, for to him they had passed away almost without a sign; but so far as others were concerned, they were long, dreary, anxious, melancholy months.

Jacob raised himself gradually upon his pillow to take a more careful survey of the room. It was then that he found out how weak he was, discovered the meagreness of his wasted little hands, and arrived at the conclusion that he was very ill. How came he so? Had he been rescued from drowning? Had the miller brought him home on a shutter, as he had brought home the boy in the next street after an evening's fishing in the mill-pool? These and a hundred other questions Jacob mentally

asked himself, and all were dismissed with equally unsatisfactory answers. He was in this oblivious state when the door was steadily and cautiously opened. It occurred to Jacob that he would lie down and watch. One, two, three, four, five light, soft, up and down steps, and then a hand pulled the bed curtains aside. One, two, three, four, five more soft steps, and the window blind was pulled down to shut out the sunshine. Then a voice whispered, "Bless him—he's asleep." Jacob could not help smiling at his own mild joke of being wide awake all the time. The face which had looked in upon him, the hand which had drawn down the blind, the voice which had whispered, "Bless him—he's asleep," went to another part of the room. Then Jacob peeped forth, and saw Mrs. Titsy put her cap to rights at the glass. He saw Mrs. Titsy encourage the aspiring cinders in the fire-grate with a gentle touch of the poker. He saw Mrs. Titsy return again to the bed, and thereupon he determined to surprise that buxom matron by suddenly pro-

nouncing her name in a very loud key. Jacob was startled at the result ; startled, not at the noise he made, but at the noise he did not make ; startled at the very small voice which said, "Mrs. Titsy—Boh !" To Jacob it was like anybody else's voice but his own. He began to wonder if he was in the condition of those poor people, mentioned in the Scriptures, who were afflicted with some evil spirit that was talking for him.

Mrs. Titsy, however, did not give him time to follow up this train of thought. She was close to him in an instant, and when he said, or when somebody else said, or something said, "Mrs. Titsy—Boh !" Mrs. Titsy commenced to laugh and cry and kiss Jacob in a manner that in nowise tended to clear up the mystery in which he found himself so important an actor.

"Wait a bit, my dear," said Mrs. Titsy, "wait a bit," as if she had a reasonable fear of his getting up and dressing himself ; "don't distress yourself ; I'll be back in a moment."

Then she laughed, and nodded her head, and drew the curtains, and opened the door, and disappeared. In another moment she returned, still laughing and nodding her head at Jacob ; and, following her upon tiptoe, came Jacob's father.

"Jacob, my dear boy," said his father, stooping down and kissing his forehead ; "Jacob, my poor boy, you are better then at last, at last."


Jacob thought he saw a tear roll down his father's cheek, and he felt his own eyes growing dim with joy.

"Am I, father?" he said presently. "Yes, I think I am—I am sure I am better."

He would have said anything just then that could give pleasure to his father, who had spoken to him in the familiar voice of old, in the tone of the old days before aunt Keziah came to Middleton.

"And you know me now, and Mrs. Titsy," said Jacob's father ; "Mrs. Titsy, who has been so kind to you?"

"Yes, father," said Jacob putting his wasted hand into his father's.



"Poor dear fellow!" said Mr. Martyn, "poor dear boy! you have had a hard time of it, well and ill for that matter; but happier days are coming; don't cry, my boy; don't cry, Jacob; cheer up."

The sympathetic, caressing manner of Jacob's father quite overcame the invalid. A chord had been touched in the boy's heart that had lain still and hushed for so long that the unaccustomed music now thrilled the wasted frame.

"There, we've had enough of this, please," said Mrs. Titsy. "Now, Jacob, no more crying; there, that will do, we must have a wash and be cheerful, and eat some breakfast."

In a very short time Mrs. Titsy had hustled Jacob's father out of the room, and Jacob was propped up with pillows and made comfortable.

During the morning the doctor came. He was not one of those medical authorities in whose care we would trust your life, most polite and courteous of readers; but he was looked upon as one of the best men

in Middleton. If you had asked his own opinion of his own abilities he would have given you most clearly to understand that but for him Middleton would have been little better than a city of the dead any time this twenty years. He was a stiff, pompous, starchy, very much linen-collared, kid-gloved, ringed gentleman, with a gold-headed cane, and a gold-headed pin in a black satin cravat.

"Put out your tongue, my friend," he said to Jacob, feeling his pulse at the same time.

"Ah, we are improving," he said in a deep hollow voice. "Improving, decidedly improving."

"It is a long lane that has no turning," said Mrs. Titsy, smoothing her apron and nodding mysteriously at Jacob.

"A wise proverb, Mrs. Titsy," said the doctor, with a grand patronising air, "we are just arriving at the turning, Mrs. Titsy."

"It seems so," said Mrs. Titsy, drawing herself up and standing upon her dignity; "quite out of danger, sir?"

"Quite out of danger," said the doctor, taking up his hat and cane and contemplating Mrs. Titsy with an air of triumph; "as I said before, we are just at the turning."

"Thank God!" said Mrs. Titsy, not noticing this last remark of the doctor, who proceeded to give instructions with regard to the patient's diet, without in his turn noticing Mrs. Titsy's fervent ejaculation.

"Arrowroot, with a little milk, plain pudding; no objection to chicken or beef-tea in moderation, no vegetables, the mixture as before, and leave off the powders; good morning, Mrs. Titsy, good morning."


"Certainly, by all means, thank you for nothing," said Mrs. Titsy, when the last sound of the doctor's footsteps had died away; "mixture as before, by all means, certainly."

Jacob thought very seriously about Mrs. Titsy's state of mind. It was plain to him that her intellect was going. She was evidently losing her head.

"No, I am not," said Mrs. Titsy, answering his wondering look; "I am quite right in my mind, Jacob; you will know all about it some day, don't distress yourself."

During the day Jacob showed still more gratifying symptoms. The old days were coming back. Susan came to see him. Julius Jennings came to see him. Tom Titsy came to see him. They were only permitted to say a few words, but it was so pleasant to hear kind tender soft expressions from these people, and it was so very pleasant to feel of importance to them. Mrs. Gompson paid him a visit, and after the first momentary chill which her presence created, Jacob found a kindly feeling in his heart for his aunt, who did her best to speak softly and agreeably; but she could not resist a parting shot at Mrs. Titsy as she left the room.

"Fewer visitors, Mrs. Titsy, and a more moderate diet, in my opinion are advisable; I only state my own opinion; it is of little moment I know what my opinion may be,



but still I state it, I record it; fewer visitors and a more moderate diet."

Many days passed away before Jacob came to know how ill he had been. During these many days he improved rapidly. In course of time Tom Titsy was permitted to have long interviews with his young master. On these occasions, at appropriate intervals during their talk, Tom would go to the window and release pigeons from his big coat pockets; and Jacob noticed that every pigeon was a carrier, gently laden, with variously coloured ribbon tied round its neck, or fluttering from its feet.

"Them's volumes, Mester Jacob," he would say, watching the pigeons as they sailed round and round in the air before starting off to the thatched roof of the Titsy household.

"I thought they were pigeons, Tom," said Jacob smiling.

"Now you're laughing at me," said Tom. "Never mind, I like it. There was a time when you couldn't laugh nor

cry either, for that matter. Them bits o' ribbon speaks no end of eloquence to Mester Johnson, if he's at home, and I think he is."

"Indeed! In what way?" asked Jacob.

"Why they're to him what they call bulletins when grand folks are ill. They tell him just how you're goin' on."

"Does that interest Mr. Johnson so much then?" inquired Jacob.

"Ah, a good deal more nor you think."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, Mester Jacob, he's never tired of hearing about you, and he's the best and the cleverest man in all the world, I don't care where the t'other comes from."

"That's right, Tom, always speak well of your friends; I am sure I am very much obliged to the Doctor. And now you shall tell me all the news, Tom."

"Yes," said Mrs. Titsy, "do tell Mester Jacob all the news while I have just one cup of tea, and listen; you won't mind that, will you, Jacob dear?"

"No, I shall like it very much," said

Jacob, composing himself carefully on his pillows to listen.

"Well, first about Susan," said Mrs. Titsy; "you know she is engaged to Mr. Silas Collinson, engaged to be married," said Mrs. Titsy.

Tom winced a little at this opening, but recovered his self-possession immediately.

"And he's gone off to America," said Tom.

"Yes," said Jacob. "What for?"

"Oh, to make his fortune bigger; he wor'n't satisfied, you know, and he's got a speculation out there as is to bring him in no end of money," said Tom.

"Much would have more," said Mrs. Titsy, mashing an ounce of a favourite mixture in a favourite fashion in a little black tea-pot with a saucer over it; "much would have more and lost all."

"The night afore he left," said Tom.

"I thought that was a secret," said Mrs. Titsy, letting out a fragrant steam for a moment and then pressing the saucer tightly over the teapot.

"Not to Mester Jacob," said Tom.

"Well then, you must know," said Mrs. Titsy, carrying the gossip away from her son, who to be sure was very slow and bungling in his narrative, "that the night before he left he was to have come to our house, having been once with Mr. Jennings in the evening; he was to have come at night again and didn't, and Mister Jennings told us privately that the fact was he had got tipsy, very tipsy, his feelings and one thing and another having overcome him, and he had to go early to Liverpool the next morning. For my part I never knew Mr. Collinson except as the soberest of men; horsey but only a little, no more than a young farmer generally is."

Mrs. Titsy had poured out her first cup of tea by this time, and under its stimulating influences was all the more inclined to talk.

"Mr. Horatio Johnson, our Doctor, Mister Jacob, who takes such an interest in you, he has got some curious idea into his head about Mr. Collinson going away,

but that's owing perhaps to his not liking Mr. Jennings. A curious man the Doctor, he has been and made the acquaintance of the gentleman as has taken Mr. Collinson's house ready furnished. As for Susan thinking of going to America to be married, if I was her I certainly should not do it, at all events at present."


Mrs. Titsy was anxious to familiarise Tom with the fact that Susan was inviolably and unalterably pledged to Mr. Collinson, and she mentioned their probable marriage as often as she could. Tom bore it very well, but generally in silence.

"It was on her account that he went to America; she was engaged to him afore he went, and agreed that if he could do better there than he could in England she would go out to him. She has had one letter to say he had arrived safe, and found things looking well."

This, and a great deal more information, Jacob received during what Mrs. Titsy called her tea-drinking, and the conversation only came to an end when that buxom


woman discovered that Jacob was fast asleep. Then she quietly left the room, cautioning Tom, if he would insist upon sitting there, to make no noise, and let the boy sleep on. So Tom sat by the bed watching his playmate as he slept, and recalling in his blundering way the happy hours they had spent together ; and thinking in his blundering fashion of Susan and of his love for her, and wondering if there were the slightest possibility of her not loving Mr. Collinson, and if she did not marry him, if he, Tom Titsy, would have any chance of being accepted. The twilight came on as Tom sat there nursing his thoughts. It was dark before he stroked Jacob's hand as it lay on the counterpane, and slipped away down stairs and out into the gaslit streets.

Tom Titsy had never confessed his love to Susan, but it was pretty well understood by Susan and everybody else what his feelings were towards her. When it was thoroughly settled that Silas Collinson was to be "the happy man" Tom treated Susan with more respect and deference than



formerly, but he did not relax one jot of his kind attentions towards her. He would carry a bucket for her, or help her in any household duty with all his former alacrity, and his assistance was valuable to Susan, who found her duties none the lighter since Mrs. Gompson became mistress in the Martyn establishment. Susan responded to Tom's delicate attentions with a kind fellow-servant's consideration, and the two people who were bent on such different roads in life, against the dearest wish of one of them, were the best of friends. There was a delicacy and thoughtfulness in Tom Titsy's treatment of Susan which in the higher walks of life would have been considered courtier-like and graceful in the extreme.

At length the pompous gentleman of the rings, and gloves, and collars, and gold-headed cane, said Jacob Martyn was sufficiently recovered to be taken out for an airing on every fine day. Accordingly, the next morning, after being duly wrapped in many shawls and blankets, Jacob was



carried into the garden by his father, carried as if he had been a child instead of a boy of fifteen and a much taller fellow than he was when the reader met him in the first chapter of this history of Jacob's life and adventures. He had grown immensely during his illness.

This glimpse of his father's garden from his father's arms on that bright spring morning was always a strangely happy remembrance to Jacob. The fresh earthy and flowery perfume that pervaded the elastic breezy air was an everlasting scent. It came back to him in after years, as if his mind inhaled the perfume with the memory of it. As Mr. Martyn walked gently up and down between the apple-trees, Jacob was too happy for words. He only spoke a few syllables, and these in a dreamy kind of assent to some kind remark of his father's; but nothing escaped his observant eye. He seemed to see things with his mind, too, and to feel them in his mind. It appeared to him as if he belonged to the garden, as if he were akin to the buds and leaves, as if

he were growing up afresh with them, coming to life with them, breathing with them the spring atmosphere, rejoicing with them that the winter had gone, and looking forward with them to the summer that was coming. Early peas were showing their leaves in emerald rows above the dark-brown earth. Mustard and cress made velvet patches here and there in sunny corners. White and pinky buds, covered with silky coats, laid their soft cheeks against the southern wall of the garden. There were crocuses and snow-drops here and there behind the box-borders. The favourite violet in the favourite corner was in full bloom. The tall poplars in the adjacent copse were covered with half-developed leaves. They looked like giant "nodding-grasses" which tremble in early hay. The apple-trees were dotted with buds. There was a brown healthy glow in the trees, a bursting into life, a fulness, a sappy budding bursting joyfulness that gladdened Jacob's heart, and seemed to promise happiness in the future. For a

moment a cold shudder passed over him, but it was only for a moment ; the reason of it was a gurgling humming sound that came over the meadows from the mill-pool. Happily the factory, with its whirling wheels and bobbins, took up the sound, and hustled it out of hearing. Then the voices of girls at their looms broke in upon the hum of machinery ; the voices that Jacob had heard so often singing the familiar hymn of his early youth.

Well might Jacob's garden seem a paradise to him for all time ; that patch of ground, with its bird-songs of freedom, and its songs of labour coming out of the great red hundred-eyed factory, coming forth in gushes of wild harmony ; that bit of Middleton sacred to the memory of mother and brother, sacred to the memory of pure thoughts and holy aspirations, of noble resolves and wondering fancies ; 'sacred to the memory of Jacob's first love. Throughout these memories, as they cropped up in after years, there lingered ever that fresh flowery perfume, and the one favourite

chant of the factory, the old-fashioned hymn which a band of Sunday-school girls had introduced there, a hymn that must permeate this history, cropping up here and there, and wandering through the story like the familiar strain in some sad drama, awakening sympathetic echoes in the hearts of those who watch the action of the piece and follow the actors to the last touching scene of all.

“There is a happy land,
Far, far away.”

It was a plaintive song coming from a mass of factory windows on a bright spring morning, but there was something of the joyousness of the time in it, something of the hopefulness and freshness of spring, and it dwelt in Jacob's mind an equal sharer with the sunshine, the perfumed breeze, the early buds, and the tender words of his father.

How often we brush shoulders with destiny, and know it not! There was one voice in that factory chorus destined to

influence Jacob's whole life. Sing on, poor toilers at the loom, spinning the silken web ! Sing on, sweet-voiced maiden ! Heaven grant thee a happy sojourn on earth, as well as in that fairer country shadowed forth in the Sunday hymn.





CHAPTER VI.

WOMAN'S MISSION IS MARRIAGE.



IN the part of Susan Harley there was more of expediency than love in her engagement with Collinson. Her regard for Silas was, however, more than respect or esteem. She was grateful to him, and she felt that it was time she was settled in life. Silas loved her. With his heart, there was a comfortable home, a good income, and, perhaps, a large fortune.

These latter considerations had influenced Susan. She was not a selfish, worldly woman, but her forbears had been well off, and she understood the practical value of a comfortable home. It was time she

should be settled in life. This woman's feeling had come upon her more than once before she ever saw Silas Collinson ; it had come upon her with thoughts of Tom Titsy, and gratitude for his kindness to her as a fellow-servant. She did not love Silas Collinson, and she did not love Tom ; but she admired and respected Silas, and felt proud of his regard for her—proud of it, and grateful for it. Once upon a time she had wondered if ever Tom would be able to keep a wife. She knew he was fond of her, though he had never said so, and she liked his mother much, but she knew that poor Tom was a dull, stupid fellow, with all his kindness and honesty, and this feeling had been sufficient for her to dismiss him from her mind when Silas Collinson, his superior a hundredfold in every respect, confessed his love and admiration for her.

Woman's mission is marriage. Susan had engaged to enter the wedded state because she had been asked to do so by a respectable, well-looking man, who loved her and could afford to keep her. Collin-


son might have looked higher too ; she knew that, and he knew it ; but he thought he had discovered in Susan all that he could wish for in a wife. He had no parents living, no one to control or influence his movements, no one to work for or to live for ; he wanted a happy face by his fireside, and a companion in some of his out-door pleasures, and he proposed that Susan should be his wife.

Now Silas had a shrewd commercial capacity. He had long since made up his mind to see America, not simply as a buyer of agricultural produce, but as a practical farmer. He had heard of some of the remarkable inventions which had been perfected in the States for cultivating the soil ; he had seen examples of their work at the Royal Agricultural Society's Exhibitions ; and latterly he had opened up communications with New York which seemed to promise an important enterprise, more particularly in the purchase and sale of corn. He had therefore resolved to go to America and spend at least twelve months in the

New World, and he hoped to make his journey a great source of profit. It was this resolution that stimulated the other concerning Susan. Before he left England it was most desirable, he thought, that Susan and himself should thoroughly understand each other, and they did.

“ I shall come back in twelve months, and then we will be married. We have only known each other three months, and if we make it a year’s courtship we shall not be called hasty, and my American journey will have some effect, perhaps, on the way we shall live, and how we shall live, and where, for that matter, seeing that I may make a great thing out of the business or I may not.”

It was very painful to Susan that she had not said good-bye to her lover. She had seen him and talked with him nearly every day for a fortnight before he left, but on that last night she had not kept her appointment, and he had gone without a last parting word. She had mourned over this in secret for many days. It was Jacob Mar-



ty's illness which brought her this trouble ; it was Jacob Martyn's illness which relieved it. The extra work of the house kept her constantly employed ; labour occupied her thoughts, and helped her to conquer stray doubts and fears concerning Silas Collinson's sincerity.

She was surprised, some three months after her lover's departure, to be summoned into the little room which Julius Jennings occupied as an office in the front part of Mr. Martyn's premises.

" Mester Jennings would like to have a word with you," said Tom Titsy.

" Where is he ?" asked Susan.

" In the office," said Tom ; " he would like you to go to the office to him."

" Oh, indeed !" said Susan ; " and what may it be about, Tom ?"

" Don't know," said Tom, " but it was particular, he said."

" Tell him I will come, Tom, please."

Poor Tom ! he did her bidding with happy alacrity. Susan laid aside her work, wiped her hands upon her white apron, ad-

justed the linen collar round her well-shaped neck, and went to the clerk's room.

"Good morning, Miss Harley, how do you do?" said Jennings, rubbing his hands, and leering at Susan.

"Good morning," said Susan, standing by the door.

"Hope you are well, Susan," said Jennings.

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Jennings," Susan replied; "what is it you want to see me for?"

"I have a letter for you," said Jennings, "a letter from Mr. Collinson."

Susan blushed, and put out her hand. She did not attempt to disguise the pleasure which the information gave her.

"Thank you; give it me, Mr. Jennings," she said.

Jennings placed a letter in her hand, and watched her cunningly as she looked at it.

"Fine fellow, Mr. Collinson. He arrived a little later than he expected, but safe and sound, and in good spirits. Yes, that letter of yours was enclosed in one to Mr. Magar,

who sent it down to me immediately. A considerate man, Mr. Magar, very considerate."


Jennings was talking as if to cover his thoughts, or prevent Susan from asking questions. He need not have troubled himself. Susan only said, "Thank you, Mr. Jennings, good morning," and hurried away with her letter.

"Does not seem at all surprised at Col-linson sending the letter through Magar. That is good. I thought she would not. It is very good—very good indeed," said Jennings, apostrophising the door when it had closed upon Susan.

"I wonder how people feel when they are sorry," he went on; "is it like tooth-ache, or chilblains, or what? Is it like being afraid, or having no money in your pocket? I sometimes think I feel sorry, but I suppose it's a mistake. Must be a mistake; let us scratch it out."

Jennings took up a sharp penknife and began to obliterate a figure in one of Mr. Martyn's books as if that were the mistake

alluded to. While he was thus engaged, Susan Harley was sitting upon a box in her bedroom spelling out Silas Collinson's letter. It was a difficult task for Susan. She had barely received sufficient education to enable her to master printing such as she found in Jacob's books of fairy tales in the days of Mrs. Martyn. Writing was a mystery to her, but not altogether beyond translation. Susan could write a little, and in due time she made out her lover's letter. It announced his arrival, and expressed his regret at not seeing her again before he left ; at the same time intimating that this was not his fault. He liked what little he had seen of the country, and would write to her again and tell her more about it. Whether he should come back or not he was uncertain, but this should be explained very soon. As he was writing to his friend Mr. Magar he sent her letter with his, and he thought this was best with regard to others, seeing that Magar would be his agent till he came home, and would transact his business. He advised Susan



to see Mr. Magar when she wanted any advice, and sent her his love and best wishes for her happiness. She could write to him at the Post-office, New York, or send her letters through Mr. Magar.


Susan hardly knew whether the letter gave her pleasure or not. There was something vague about it, something cold and formal. She did not like the letter so well as she thought she should. She derived great satisfaction from the fact of her lover's safe arrival, and she told him this in her reply—told him in her plain way ; and she wished Silas would send her letters straight through the post. Of course everybody who was his friend would be hers, but she would rather Mr. Magar was anybody's friend but his. She told Silas not to work and run risks on her account, and she finished the letter with some commonplace gossip about Middleton and good news of Jacob Martyn's progress towards restored health.

Julius Jennings gave Susan every information with regard to the postage to Ame-

rica, and offered to post the letter for her ; but Susan preferred to drop it into the letter-box herself, and did so.

A few weeks afterwards there came another letter, written in a more loving spirit, and suggesting that Susan should come out to America if she still cared for the writer. Silas informed her that he had quite made up his mind not to return. He found that the business he had entered upon demanded constant attention, and in a monetary sense that he had, as he might say, hit upon a good mine. He had instructed his friend Magar to dispose of his property in England and supply her with whatever money she might require to come over. Some folk might think it strange for her to go over, but she knew him as an honest man and pledged to her, and she should not be a day on shore without being his wife.

Susan was unhappy concerning these letters. She did not at all know what to make of them. They were not the letters she had expected to receive. But Mrs.



Titsy, whom she consulted about them, said they were straightforward, manly letters, and all that a young woman could desire.

They were discussing the subject when the miller called at the Titsys. He had thriven immensely of late, and Mrs. Titsy considered it an honour to receive him in her cottage.

"Ah, I am glad to see you two folks together," he said, "very glad, because I have a few words to say which I should like you both to hear. My friend Collinson wants his intended wife to go out to America to be married."

"Yes, indeed, so she was just telling me," said Mrs. Titsy; "and will you sit down, sir? though this is but a poor house to yours."

"Poor, but honest; that's the time of day, Mrs. Titsy. I am one of the people, and go in for what is straight. Hollo! Confound, beggar that dog, he's biting my leg."

"Down, Cæsar, down; how dare you!" ~

screamed Mrs. Titsy, striking the offending animal with a broom just as Magar kicked him with his heavy boot.

"A beast, that dog," said Magar. "I always hated him; he's a foreign brute, I know, a mongrel dam brute. Mrs. Titsy, I shall be the death of that dog if you don't keep him tied up."

Mrs. Titsy apologised, was very sorry, and begged Mr. Magar to look over the dog's ill behaviour, which with a very bad grace he consented to do by-and-by.

"Now there's no man in this town who has more respect for Miss Harley than me; I've often had thoughts of making up to her myself, and trying to cut Silas out."

"Indeed," said Susan, scornfully; "and is that what you have come here to say?"

"No, Miss, it isn't; no, Susan, no; I'm a plain, straightforward man. I've come to ask what it is your pleasure to do, as I am a sort of trustee for Mr. Collinson, and he has placed money in my hands for you. And here's a letter which I only got this morning, and he tells me that inside it he



has told you what his wishes are. I am to give you one hundred pounds."

"Generous man; I always liked him," said Mrs. Titsy.

Susan only listened.

"Now, as a plain, straightforward man, I should say take the money by all means, but don't go out, not at present at all events. If a man has not enough liking for a woman to come over that drop of water and marry her in her own country, why I say he don't deserve her at all. You have my opinion, and I have told Silas the same. But it's not for me to decide in such a business. Whatever Susan wishes I am ready to carry out, but I should say don't go, and I say it in presence of a sensible woman as can advise another sensible woman; and that's all I've got to say. Ladies, I wish you good morning."

Taking up his hat, Mr. Ephraim Magar made an awkward bow to the two women and bowed himself to the door, and then out into the street. They caught sight of

his flat sinister face as he passed the window.

"A rough but good man," said Mrs. Titsy, "I am sure."

"A rough and bad man," said Susan, "if ever I saw one. As for his advice, you may depend on it I shall be sure to do quite the contrary to whatever that may be."

And it came to pass that Susan acted upon this avowal. She resolved upon going out to Silas. It was no use for anyone to argue with her, she said; her mind was made up, and she would go.





CHAPTER VII.

ILLUSTRATES THE OLD PROVERB ABOUT A
FRIEND IN NEED.

MRS. GOMPSON had expressed herself very warmly on the impropriety of Susan's conduct in leaving England prior to her marriage, intimating that there was no knowing whether she might not be basely deceived when she arrived in New York. Men were a perfidious lot, as far as Mrs. Gompson's experience went, and she advised Susan to go out a wife or not to go at all. But Susan had placed her trust in Collinson. She gave him full credit for being as honest and true as herself.

It would have looked better, no doubt, in the eyes of the world, had Silas returned, married Susan, and taken her to his new home in America; but if Silas and Susan, two good, honest, faithful, and well-known respectable people, chose to arrange that the marriage should be solemnised on the other side of the Atlantic, there was nothing in Susan's conduct upon which she need fear criticism; so Susan was determined to go. Mrs. Gompson shook her false curls, and said of course Susan might please herself; and several gossips in the neighbourhood, including a few confirmed spinsters, pitied the poor girl most assiduously.

Some weeks after the sale of Collinson's property, Susan received a note from Mr. Magar, requesting her to meet him in the afternoon of the following day at his house, to receive the money which Silas had directed him to pay to her out of the proceeds of the sale of Mr. Collinson's effects. Susan went accordingly.

Magar's was an imposing-looking house, worthy of a newly-made Town Councillor, who had been returned for the central ward at the head of the poll, and one who had it in contemplation to retire from business and put himself in nomination for the Mayoralty; for Magar had prospered greatly of late, and was becoming much more circumspect in his manners, and making, it was observable to everybody, visible efforts to correct his mode of speech, and "talk fine," as the Middletonians characterised all language free from their own extraordinary dialect. Although Susan knew that before long, as Collinson's wife, she would be mistress of as fine a house as Magar's, she knocked with considerable diffidence at the well-polished door, and felt nervous when it was opened in the presence of an oaken hall table, with an immense stag's head and antlers upon it; a hat-stand with pegs made of polished horns; a rail covered with rugs and coats, and hung with whips; the head of a huge ox over the staircase; and an open door exhibiting the

imposing length of a drawing-room, blazing with a red and green carpet.

Susan was shown upstairs into a small room which Magar called his snugery. When she found herself in the miller's presence, she could not disguise her surprise at the change in his appearance. He had been judiciously dressed by a tailor of much higher culture than the artist who had hitherto worked for him. He sat at a desk writing, and looked quite magisterial.

"Good morning, Miss Harley," he said in his best manner. "I hope I see you well."

Susan said she was very well.

"Sit down, pray; let me get you a chair; you don't seem well."

Susan again said she was very well, but it was with a fixed and peculiar look at Magar.

"You seem surprised, my girl," said the miller, coming down a little from the great height which he had previously occupied.

"Yes, I am," said Susan.

"You think I'm changed," Magar responded. "Maybe I am a little. We all change with circumstances, but you will find me the same man, Susan—plain, straightforward, and to the point as ever."

Magar leaned back in his chair, and made a palpable effort to look his best. He smiled at Susan, and hoped she would make herself at home.

"I don't understand you at all," said Susan; "I came here on business, and so far as that is concerned, I shall certainly try to make myself at home," said Susan.

"That's right, that's right, Susan," Magar replied, going to an adjacent cupboard and putting a decanter of wine upon the table. "You will take just one glass of wine, eh?"

"No, thank you," said Susan; "I never drink wine."

"Then it is time you made a beginning. Come, let me give you one glass."

Even Susan could not help noticing the peculiarity of Magar's efforts to shake off the Middleton dialect with the Middleton tailor's clothes. The moment he forgot to play his part as a leading burgess matriculating for the position of chief magistrate, he fell back into his old manner of speech. His thees and thous and wenches and lasses came back the moment his earnestness and passion returned.

"You won't drink a glass? Very well; then let us come to business. You have made up your mind to go to America?"

"Yes," said Susan.

"Then I wish thou would take me," Magar replied, again trying the effect of the fascinating leer with which he had greeted her when she first entered the room.

"I think you have some particular message for me from Silas," said Susan, disregarding his remark and the look which had accompanied it.

"Ah, he's a happy man; he don't deserve thee, lass—not he."

Magar came close to Susan as he said this, and put so much tender expression into his face that under other circumstances Susan would have laughed at him, and slapped it. But now she was afraid of him. She had been afraid from the first moment when she entered the room, as if some vague sense of danger had taken possession of her.

"Now look here, Susan; I want to talk to you seriously. Come here, my girl," said Magar, coaxingly; "I am a straightforward man, and——"

"You are a fool, and something worse!" said Susan, pushing him aside just as he had put his arm familiarly upon her shoulder.

"Holloa! hoity-toity! it's no good making for the door; it is shut, and it is locked. Now come, let us be friends and talk like friends."

Magar locked the door and stood with his back against it.

"What do you mean?" said Susan, with a fierce light in her eye.

"Nothing but what's straight and honest ; I mean to be friends with Susan Harley."

"Well, and so you shall be friends," said Susan, trying another mode of treatment ; "we are friends ; but please to unlock that door !"

"Will you shake hands with me ?"

"Yes, if you will unlock the door and open it."

Magar opened the door and offered his hand. Susan kept her word.

"That's right ; now look here, let us talk sensibly ; you will be going to America. Don't go if you be wise, unless you go with me. There, don't scowl at me, I am in earnest ; that man cares nothing for thee, and I do !"

"I will hear no more of this," said Susan, rushing towards the door.

Magar barred the way.

"It's no good making a row. There's nobody in the house. I sent the girl out into the next street when you came in. If you scream and make a fuss, there

will only be a jolly talk in the town, and they'll make a mountain out of nothing—trust Mother Gompson for that ; I mean you to hear what I have to say.”

“ I will not hear you,” said Susan, putting her hands to her ears.

“ Yes you will, my love,” said Magar, seizing her right wrist, and bringing back the old hideous look into his face, with the old hideous intention of being fascinating. “ Listen ! Silas Collinson is a beggar, a fool, a nobody. I could make him a bankrupt to-morrow ; he's in my power ; he's neither been true to me nor to thee ; I could crush him, and when you see him thou'lt ask me to do it.”

This change of Magar's tactics had its desired effect, but from an entirely different motive than that which the miller thought to excite. Susan listened. There was something so terrible in Magar's manner, something so fiendish, that she felt it her duty to listen, felt it the duty of Silas Collinson's future wife to hear his traducer that she might thwart his malice, that she

might warn Silas and put him on his guard.

"There, be calm, and I will listen," said Susan.

"Of course you will," said Magar ; "but that it shall not be said I did not give thee thy rights before I warned thee, here is one hundred pounds ; give me a 'receipt for it."

Magar drew from a drawer in his desk ten crisp Bank of England notes, and laid them before Susan.

"Tell me, sir, if you please," said Susan, once more trying to smother her fears and speak in a friendly way, "tell me what you mean by speaking against Silas as you have done."

"Give me a receipt for this money," Magar replied.

Susan wrote as well as she could in large cramped letters, with a tremble in them, "Received of Mr. Magar £100.—SUSAN HARLEY."

"This is what I mean, Susan : I am a plain man, and straightforward's my motto.

I've had my eye on you this long time, and if I had been in Collinson's place I'd have come from the other end of the world to marry thee. Don't start like that ; I'm a better man than Silas, and if you'll change your mind about him I'll marry thee to-morrow. Come, now, what do you say to that ?—and if you want to go abroad, why I will go ; I don't mind ; I've got money enough, and it don't matter where I live. Now, what do you say—a bird in the hand, you know ? Here I am, a straightforward man, with plenty of money. Over the sea yonder is a beggar, a poor devil who wouldn't, if he could, come over and fetch thee. Now, then, here you are, which will you have ? Say me, and seal it with a kiss, and the job's done."

It was a bitter struggle for Susan to remain and listen to Magar's vile propositions, but she seemed to have little choice in the matter. If she attempted to leave the room Magar prevented her, and she dreaded the scandal that might follow an alarm and a rescue. Moreover, her woman's

wit told her that calmness and judgment might place Magar's cards in her own hands, and enable Collinson to see his dreadful game, whatever it might be. Therefore, with a brave heart she listened.

During this interview between Susan and Silas Collinson's agent, Dr. Horatio Johnson, on a mission of mercy, obtaining signatures to a memorial in favour of a wretched prisoner, who had been unfairly convicted of a robbery—knocked at Mr. Magar's door. A pert domestic replied, and informed the Doctor that Mr. Magar was not to be disturbed. He was engaged with Susan Harley.

The Doctor said he would wait, as he wanted to see Miss Harley as well as the master. The pert domestic said he might please himself, and he pleased himself by sitting on the edge of a chair close to the dining-room door. He was not an inquisitive man, but he hated Magar, and had the warmest regard for Susan. Hearing voices in a louder key than that which generally betokens friendly conversation,

he stepped into the hall and listened. Simply influenced by kindly feeling for Susan, he listened very attentively. He thought Susan was appealing to Magar. There was fear in her voice. He crept up two stairs. Susan was angry. "I defy you," she said. Horatio crept up three stairs. Then Magar spoke quietly, and Susan responded calmly, but still in fear. Horatio, in three long strides, stood outside the door of Mr. Magar's "snuggery."

"You'll think of it, then, to-night," said Magar.

"I will," said Susan, "pray let me go now."

There were sounds of a short sharp scuffle.

Horatio turned up the coat-cuff of his right arm.

"Just one kiss to seal it," gasped Magar, evidently struggling with his victim.

Horatio buttoned his coat.


"Help, help!" cried Susan.

The next moment Magar measured his length upon the floor, and Susan was in

the arms of Horatio Johnson—a friend indeed.


Horatio had not heard all that was said, but, in his opinion, the scream of a woman, and that woman Susan Harley, neutralised all the rights and privileges set up in the proverb which declares that an Englishman's house is his castle. No man had a right to be a Blue Beard, if he had a castle, thought Horatio, which said thought passed through his capacious mind in a moment, and acting upon this view of citizenship he played the part of woman's champion with that wonderful energy which had carried locks, bolts, and bars before it, culminating in the overthrow of Blue Beard upon Blue Beard's own hearth-rug.

The fallen one seeming in no hurry to rise again, and his pert domestic being engaged at the end of the street in conversation with the baker's boy, the Doctor walked off with Susan, who, on the way home, gave him an outline of what had occurred, carefully omitting, however, to mention anything about Collinson being in Magar's



power, fearing that such an exposure would strengthen the persuasion already used to prevent her leaving England. Johnson had overheard the mention of Collinson's name, but could not understand how or why it was used. Susan was not long in discovering this, to her great satisfaction ; for now she was more than ever bent upon going to Silas. The thought of Collinson poor, Collinson a beggar, Collinson in the power of Magar, excited sensations which she had not previously felt. Her highest nature was touched. She experienced something of that sympathetic yearning which carries woman into the midst of disease and death, a ministering angel. With this feeling was coupled a deep gratitude that almost warmed into love. Silas Collinson in prosperity had sought her who was in a much humbler sphere of life than himself. He had loved her for herself alone—she knew he loved her ; and now that some unforeseen misfortune had brought him down in the world she longed to prove herself worthy of his love and confidence.

It was autumn again, and the wind was driving before it the smoke of the factory chimneys, driving it down the narrow streets and through the narrow courts, and dispersing it in the Middleton meadows. It shook Mrs. Titsy's window-shutters as it passed, and set Horatio Johnson thinking of the last time Silas Collinson had called there in search of Susan. Silas Collinson's intended wife was spending the evening with her friend Mrs. Titsy, and talking over the arrangements for her journey to New York. Tom Titsy was toasting his feet by the fire and listening to the domestic eloquence of his mother and the advice which Horatio Johnson was giving to Susan. The Doctor was particularly earnest in what he said, and was only tempted once to introduce the favourite Latin motto, and then he stuck half-way. Susan was thoughtful and sad, as well she might be with the wind sighing so mournfully at the window, and the great sea rolling between her and the man whom she was beginning to love in real earnest.



Cæsar went to the door while they were talking, and came back again, lying at the feet of Susan and looking steadfastly at his master as if influenced by some instinctive sympathy for both of them.

Tom thought the dog was fidgety and strange, and he went to the front door himself just in time to see a crouching figure steal away from the window.

"Cæsar ! here, lad ; hie up, man—pin him !" said Tom, following up the brief command that had brought the dog into the street.

In a moment Cæsar was barking and jumping round the figure, which had retreated from the window, and which was now returning, cursing the dog fiercely.

"Call your dog away, Tom Titsy ; call the brute away, or I'll brain him !" exclaimed the man, hoarse with passion.

Tom had followed his dog a few yards along the street.

"Oh, it's you, Mester Magar, is it ? I thought as somebody was listening at the

shutters," said Tom. "Here, come in, Cæsar; come in, lad; down, dost hear? Down, dog."

"Listening be hanged," said Magar. "What should I listen for?"

"I'll be hanged if I know," said Tom, "dost thou, Cæsar, eh, dog? good dog; come then, come along; he'll brain thee, he says."

The dog leaped up at Tom, and they both returned to the cottage, leaving Magar cursing and slinking away in a contrary direction.

"Magar, eh?" said the Doctor; "that's odd, nay, it's more than odd; ha! what's in the wind, I wonder? We'll make a note of this, Tom: just a little mem. as they say."

Going to the calendar which had replaced the one of the previous year, the Doctor took out his pencil to mark the date. He started for a moment at the coincidence which presented itself with peculiar force to his mind. Once again it was the Fifteenth of November!

“Tom,” said the Doctor, solemnly, “when you see Susan home to-night don’t go half-way; see her into Mr. Martyn’s house.”





CHAPTER VIII.

A FACTORY VISION OF BEAUTY.




NCE fairly released from the sick-room, Jacob rapidly recovered his strength. He grew out of his clothes and out of the Gompson power. Mrs. Gompson declared he was too much for her.

One day, when her nephew had been particularly obstinate in opposing some new piece of tyranny, Mrs. Gompson suggested to Mr. Martyn the desirability of sending Jacob to a boarding-school. Day schools, she argued, were a mistake ; boys made companions all over the town, and were spoiled in temper and disposition by mixing with their inferiors ; while, in living

with a master, there was a guarantee that their morals were looked after, and that they were only permitted to associate with their equals. Whether these reasons carried any weight with Mr. Martyn, or not, we are not prepared to say. We hope he took a broader view of Jacob's educational requirements, though he agreed with his sister that Jacob ought to be placed under a good master at some distance from Middleton.

Singularly enough, when Mr. Martyn opened his letters, on an eventful morning some few weeks after this conversation about Jacob's education, he found that his earliest communication for the next *Middleton Star* was an advertisement in which the master of the public school at Cartown intimated to parents and guardians that he had a vacancy for two or three young gentlemen, as in-door pupils, on moderate terms—the house being pleasantly situated, and references kindly permitted to the vicar of the parish. This bait caught its first fish before it had been fairly dropped



into the advertising sea of a newspaper. After communicating with the vicar of the parish of Cartown, Mr. Martyn determined that his son should be one of the two or three young gentlemen for whom Mr. Gregory Spawling had vacancies.

Accordingly, in due time, the mail-cart was ordered to call for Jacob, and the night before the morning fixed for starting, the ostler from the inn left word that the Cartown mail would leave Middleton as early as seven o'clock.

Jacob did not dislike the idea of leaving home, especially as everybody was so kind to him on the occasion ; his father giving him more pocket-money than he had ever before possessed ; Susan packing no end of curious things among his clothes ; Tom sending him, wrapped up in brown paper, a bran new pocket-knife ; Mrs. Gompson presenting him with a comb and brush ; Dr. Johnson sending him a cricket bat ; and Mrs. Titsy adding to his treasures a book of fairy tales, which she had been

advised by the Doctor to purchase, instead of a very severe work on "The Deathbeds of Good and Bad Boys," which she had originally selected as "a keepsake for Sunday reading."

All this was very gratifying to Jacob, and excited him into a flutter of good spirits that gave him little sleep at night, and made him wake very early the next morning. Indeed he was up almost as soon as the birds; but he felt a little sad when he went into the garden to bid everything there good-bye. The sun had only just risen. The factory had not begun to make its accustomed noise, though the engine could be heard hissing in a subdued tone, while a thin column of smoke went lazily up from the tall chimney. Jacob wished he could hear the sweet voice which had soothed and charmed him on many a sunny day when he was out among the apple-trees. Then he thought how much he should like to see her to whom the voice belonged. He wondered why he had never thought of this until now when

he was about to leave the place, perhaps for ever.

While a tide of ideas was flowing in this direction, Jacob happened to look up towards the windows whence the sweet sounds had so often come, and there, lo and behold ! he saw a face looking out of one of the factory windows, just filling up the opening which had been made out of a couple of panes—and, oh, what a sweet face it was ! round and rosy, fair and blue-eyed, and surrounded by golden hair finer than the wealth of yellow silk from China and Japan that went into the factory in bundles of gossamer-like threads, and came out in great breadths of yarn that were sent all over the world to adorn ladies of all degrees. At first Jacob thought the face must belong to an angel, or to a fairy who was going to give him three wishes. He had almost decided to ask as his first wish that his mother should be brought to life again, and for the second that the fairy should come and live with them, when the face disappeared ; but the dear familiar voice carolled forth one of

the old songs so sweetly that a thrush, which had been singing in the apple-trees, stopped to listen as eagerly as Jacob—at least Jacob thought so ; but allowance must be made for a romantic youth just setting out into the world.

“There is a happy land
Far, far away,”

was the burden of the song, and had the singer only known what a happy land she might have made of Middleton, and every other place, to Jacob Martyn, that morning, by putting her face through the little window once more, and saying “Good-bye, Jacob,” she would certainly have done so ; because her face was a sure index to the kindness of her heart.

Before the song was over, Susan came to hurry Jacob on his journey.

“You don’t want to go, eh?”

“I don’t know,” said Jacob.

“We are bound to do a great many things in this world which we don’t like ; but the same Power that taught yon

swallow to come thousands of miles to build its nest under that window is guiding us."


"How serious we are! You are becoming almost as bad as Mr. Jennings with his sermons."

"I hope not, my love," said Susan. "Do you know, Jacob," she continued, "there is something about Mr. Jennings that I very much dislike? He is not what he pretends to be. Never say I said so, Jacob; but remember it—*remember* it, Jacob."

"Susan, you look ill, and you are crying!" exclaimed Jacob. "What is the matter? Don't fret about me; I shall soon come back."

"But I shall be gone then, love; and years, many years, may go over before we meet again."

"All the better, Susan. I shall be a man when you come back, and then you know I can visit you at your house, and you can come to see me at mine. Don't be down-hearted, Susan. Let us say good-bye here, and promise never to forget each other."



Jacob took both her hands, and she kissed him, just as aunt Keziah appeared upon the scene.

"Come, come, Susan, let the boy have his breakfast ; you treat him as if he were a baby. Jacob, I say, be quick !"

Mrs. Gompson seized Jacob's hand, which Jacob resented by immediately releasing himself, and looking at his aunt defiantly.

"Well, well, sir ; we will have no noise now : it is time there was a parting here," said Mrs. Gompson, walking on alone ; "the ingratitude of some people begins in the cradle."

"There are differences of opinion, Mrs. Gompson, as to what folk ought to be grateful for," said Susan.


"And the impudence of some people is not lessened by their fine airs," continued Mrs. Gompson ; and thus this trio entered Mr. Martyn's house ; soon after which Jacob Martyn had said good-bye to the whole household.

The conveyance in which Jacob made

his first journey into the outer world of Middleton was one that has now disappeared from English highways. It was a comfortable well-to-do sort of cart, capable of carrying four passengers, in addition to the driver. It was dignified by the title of "The Royal Mail," which designation it claimed by reason of its being the postal conveyance between Middleton and Cartown.

The driver of the mail was a bluff hearty countryman, who had been a rural postman before the railway was introduced into Middleton. Driver and cart have now been superseded; the former by a sharp, "horsey" looking fellow, and the cart by a red, sugar-loaf shaped, high-wheeled chariot, constructed to carry the driver and the letter-bags.

When Jacob Martyn was a boy the railway was in its infancy, as they say steam is still, and there were several coaches passing daily through Middleton, collecting crowds at the chief inn, to see the foaming steeds changed, and to hear the guards



crack their jokes, and to see the drivers crack their whips. To race with the coaches was the daily delight of Will Tunster. On the morning when Jacob left Middleton the mail-cart soon distanced the coach ; for Will had an unusually light load of letters and parcels, and Jacob Martyn was his only passenger.

On their route they delivered letter-bags at Crossley, a mining village which every year sent up to London thousands of tons of coals. Never having been far beyond the precincts of Middleton, Jacob took careful note of all he saw, and especially at Crossley, which was one of the most notable sights in the wonderful panorama that seemed to be flying past him. There were long rows of newly-built cottages, with water-tubs in front and pig-stys behind ; red burly Dissenting chapels ; beer-houses and inns ; little shop-windows filled with tempting displays of sugar and flies, tape, nutmegs, clogs, currants, mouse-traps, gingerbread, mops, buckets, Spanish juice, shot-bags—the latter adorned with an illus-

tration in which the chief figure was a man firing a gun, at the discharge of which innumerable birds were falling to a brace of barking dogs. At intervals, high chimneys towered above the little mining town, casting long shadows on the house-tops, and darkening the sky with rolling clouds of smoke. On one side of the village the blackened fields looked like gigantic cordage manufactories. The coal-pits were surmounted by long three-legged erections, supporting a net-work of ropes which ran along iron rollers with an incessant rattle. Mountains of coal were piled along the road side. Troops of grimy miners, who had been working through the night, wended their way to their respective homes in the houses with the pig-stys and water-tubs, in front of which noisy children quarrelled over marbles, to the annoyance of boisterous mothers, who fought the battles of their respective offspring in language more noticeable for its energy than for its refinement.

"I must waken them up yonder," said



Will, as they left Crossley and approached a turning in the road ; whereupon he commenced an ambitious performance on an old keyed bugle, vigorously blowing out the melody of "Rory O'More," with snatches of which he announced his approach at the various villages or inns for which he had parcels. Gradually "Rory O'More," was transformed into "Tom Moody," over which the performer grew red in the face.

Then Crossley disappeared, and the change in the scenery, as Will Tunster's horse turned up a by-lane, was as striking, when compared with Crossley, as the difference between Bagdad and the enchanted regions which surrounded that famous city of romance. In place of coal-pits and pitmen's hovels, there were now tall hedges and trees, and rich pastures. On one side of the road there was a rude stone foot-path, fringed by a stream of clear water, which irrigated a numberless variety of cresses ; and on the other a long verdant streak of grass stretched into the distance,

where a small house lay half concealed by a wood.

"Oh, how pretty!" said Jacob involuntarily, as this bit of rural fairy land opened up before him.

"Ah, it's a noice tune enough; I've blown it for years," said Will Tunster, taking Jacob's remark as a compliment to the echo passages in "Tom Moody." "We've gotten to stop here to take up Miss Dorothy Cantrill, your schoolmester's housekeeper, and somebody else's housekeeper that is to be when the toime comes," continued Will as he pulled up opposite the house amongst the trees.

The door was opened as the mail stopped. An elderly woman handed out a bonnet-box, and a man brought forth a portman-teau covered with a very rich drawing-room paper. Next came a shawl, an umbrella, another little box, and a bunch of flowers; and then the passenger herself, a comely-looking woman of about thirty, with whom Will Tunster shook hands, and whom Will Tunster carefully assisted into the cart.

"Here's the young gentleman who is to have the honour of living wi' you, Dorothy," said Will Tunster, directing her attention to Jacob.

"How do you do, sir?" said Dorothy, settling herself into a seat, her face beaming with good nature. "I hope Mr. Tunster has been kind to you."

"Thank you," said Jacob; "yes, he has been very kind."

"I've played him 'Tom Moody' with variations, and told him all about the pits and foire damp, and colliery accidents, haven't I, Mester Jacob?" said Will, touching up his mare as he spoke.

"Yes, sir," said Jacob.

Dorothy waved her handkerchief to her father and mother, Will flourished his whip and played very loudly the echo passages in "Tom Moody," Jacob waved his cap to the old people, the mail-cart turned another bend in the road, and then the schoolmaster's housekeeper began asking Will a variety of questions concerning the news of Middleton and Crossley. Will told

her how he had been to the parson's at the latter town, to hear a lecture on fire damp, a recent explosion at one of the pits there having destroyed a hundred men and boys.

"Dear me," said Dorothy, "you talk like a book."

"You'd rather I should talk like a letter : Miss Dorothy Cantrill, care of Mr. Gregory Spawling, Cartown, Midlandshire, England, and if not there, at Mr. Cantrill's, near Crossley, post paid," said Will, holding his whip and ribbons in one hand, and gazing intently into the other, as if he were actually reading the superscription of a letter. On pronouncing the last word, he cast a sly glance at Dorothy, who, instead of making any reply, put the corner of her apron to each eye in succession, and complained of the dusty road. This little subterfuge, however, was without avail, for Jacob saw that she was crying.

Will coughed violently and thrashed his horse, but finding that this did not repair the mischief, he turned sharply round upon Dorothy, and begged her pardon "a thou-

sand times over"—assuring her that he did not mean to hurt her feelings.

Why Miss Cantrill should have cried at all Jacob could not understand, but he was quite convinced that Mr. Tunster had been guilty of some gross act of unkindness, and until the mail-driver had begged Dorothy's pardon a thousand times, Will, despite his musical powers, had very much deteriorated in Jacob's good opinion.

The storm at an end, Mr. Tunster commenced to blow his horn with unwonted vigour (but whether the tune was "Rory O'More," "Tom Moody," or both, or neither, not Will nor any other accomplished musician could have decided), and the little party entered Cartown.

"Yonder is the church," said Dorothy, pointing to a brown, time-worn tower among a clump of trees; "and that's the 'Blue Posts,'" pointing to an inn, with two posts painted blue, a water-trough, a bucket, and two men refreshing themselves and their horses; "and this is the market-place," she continued, as they entered an

irregular square of irregular houses and shops, with a few people loitering about on an irregular pavement, and several persons looking from their windows and several tradesmen gazing from their doors at a carriage and pair, which had halted before the chemist's shop.

"And here's the post-office," said Will, as he pulled up opposite a private house with a window half blackened, and a slit in one of the panes for letters, a green curtain above, and an "Important Notice" with a coat of arms fitted into one of the square panes at the side. A black square beneath this was opened, and Will, thrusting in a leather bag covered about the neck with worn-out wax seals, said it was "nice weather;" and on the mail started again, the driver occasionally dropping a parcel into the hands of people who were standing at their shop doors, in anticipation of packages inscribed with their names and addresses.


Miss Cantrill, who was quite at home with Jacob already, and was almost as kind to him as Susan herself, said: Dear me,

the streets seemed quite natural again since she had seen them, which was a fortnight come Monday—such a holiday as she had not had for some time. She told Jacob a great deal about the town, and said she was sure he would like Mr. Spawling. Will Tunster expressed a similar opinion, and guessed that Jacob would like Mr. Spawling's housekeeper too. Jacob frankly admitted that he liked her already, an admission which pleased Dorothy amazingly, and an admission which Susan Harley might not have liked so well, much as she desired Jacob's happiness ; for there is a tinge of jealousy in every phase of woman's love.

"That's the school," at length said Dorothy, pointing to a plain stone building standing between a grocer's shop on the one hand, and a large square playground on the other. It was a very plain-looking establishment, even to the sign which described the place, in simple Roman capitals, as "The Cartown Public School." Will Tunster said the school was only some

five years old, but he understood it was doing a deal of good; upon which he entered into some very crude speculations about the position he might have held in society if there had been such "shops" for learning when he was a boy, until once more he gave the reins a check and the conveyance stopped at Mr. Spawling's—a small house standing alone in a bye-lane some few hundred yards from the school, with a blood-red rose climbing over a lattice porch, and—the front door being open—a refreshing peep, right across a long strip of oil-cloth and well-cleaned stones, into a back garden full of miscellaneous vegetables and flowers.

Mr. Spawling came to the door to meet his visitors. He was a man beyond the meridian of life; though Time had dealt kindly with him, only leaving a few grey marks of his passing upon Mr. Spawling's head and among Mr. Spawling's whiskers. It is true there was a slight falling in at the mouth, but this only heightened the benignant expression which animated his



regular features. There was an elasticity in his gait, a quiet grace of manner, a bright healthy twinkle of the eye, and a sound of music in Mr. Spawling's voice that relieved Jacob's mind of a great weight of doubt and fear, which had occasionally influenced his thoughts and speculations concerning his new home.

"Well, my boy, how are you?" said Mr. Spawling, when Jacob had alighted; "and how have you enjoyed yourself, Dorothy? and how does the world go with you, Mr. Tunster?" listening and smiling at the answer which each question elicited.

While these little courtesies were being observed, Will handed out the luggage. Dorothy soon bustled off her bonnet and shawl, and at Mr. Spawling's direction drew a glass of beer for Will: and in a most astonishingly short space of time Jacob found himself in a pleasant little parlour, taking tea, with Dorothy on one side and Mr. Spawling on the other.

That evening rapidly changed into night, though the twilight lingered lovingly about

the open window, while the wind wandered gently in, laden with the scent of mignonette and sweetbrier. The lamp was, however, trimmed at last, and—with the sounds of Mr. Spawling's voice (reading a chapter of the Old Testament before Jacob's retiring) lingering in his ear, and the rattle of the cart, and the good-bye of Susan, and the remembrance of bright spots in the panorama of the day's journey, all mingling together in a strange jumble—Jacob soon found himself between the cleanest and coolest of white sheets, surrounded by the whitest of white dimity, in the smallest and prettiest of pretty little rooms, trying to go to sleep, and feeling himself able to do nothing but think and dream, until at length memory gradually faded away, and even the angel face looking out of the factory window was forgotten.



CHAPTER IX.

JACOB GETS UP EARLY AND MAKES THE
ACQUAINTANCE OF SPENZONIAN WHIFFLER.

EARLY the next morning Jacob was awakened by a noise of thumping, and plunging, and knocking, and scrubbing, and scouring. When he had dressed, and was descending the stairs, he was saluted with a rough push from a side door, and an exclamation of: "Now, you sir, can't you keep to the right when you see that the other side's wet?" On turning round he met the gaze of Dorothy Cantrill, wrapped up to the neck in a coarse apron, and with her arms black and bare. She glared at him furiously for a moment, and then went on rubbing the

brass round a bedroom key-hole with an energy quite unnecessary upon such a trifle of metal. A boy, coming upstairs, in corduroy clothes (ornamented with brass buttons, and made something after the fashion of Harlequin's suit), almost exploded, in apparently desperate efforts to keep down a strong exercise of his risible faculties; and looking at Jacob several times, over his shoulder, blew out his cheeks, held his sides, and stooped, as if with great effort, to intimate that he was very much tickled and delighted at Dorothy's conduct.

"Now then, you Spen, have you brought that brush?" cried Dorothy, dashing out upon Whiffler, when he had reached the landing, and seizing the brush in question; "now fetch me a pail:" whereupon Whiffler, leaping down six stairs at a time and turning a somersault at the bottom, disappeared at the back of the house.

Below stairs Jacob found his new abode in extraordinary disorder. It was just as though the whole of the furniture, having


had a midnight revel with Hans Christian Andersen, had been transfixed in unlawful positions by some angry magician. Chairs were locked in fond embraces, or standing carelessly upside down. Tables were making love to arm-chairs. Ornaments of every description had been romping on the sofa. A little jaunty card-table was perched upon a sideboard, petrified no doubt in the very act of shouting "hurrah!" and crowing over the rest of its less nimble companions. There was a great patch of black on the hearth, and the poker and tongs had turned white with rage (or whiting) at the conduct of a tea kettle which had tipped forward, and which was quietly emptying itself upon them; a few red cinders, fallen into the water beneath, hissing an additional insult to the fire-irons.

Jacob had hardly time to note all this, ere Dorothy, with a female lieutenant, entered the room. Her first inquiry was, had Jacob any eyes. Jacob said he had, and so he thought had somebody else, for

Whiffler was peeping round the door at him with an unmistakable pair, which twinkled and flashed like stars.

“Well, and couldn’t you see that kettle, young sir?” said Dorothy, seizing the offending vessel and thrusting it deep down among the cinders. “It’s well lads should come to school to learn something; it’s precious little sense or manners they are born with; getting up at five o’clock on a cleaning morning, without why or wherefore, or by your leave or warning. Here, Whiffler, take this young gentleman out into the fields till I’ve done, and don’t stand grinning there, or I’ll polish your buttons till the brass shames your brazen face.”

“Now, Master Jacob, this serves you right,” whispered a still small voice in Jacob’s conscience. “It was only yesterday that you kissed Susan Harley, and promised never to forget her, and it was only last evening that you did something worse than forgetting her; you only remembered her to think how lucky you



were in having so soon partially replaced her by another kind-hearted woman, who would, you felt sure, be a second Susan to you. Now be warned, Jacob ; make new friends if you like, and as many as you can, but prize the old and tried ones, and never let the new ones thrust them from their places in the deepest recesses of your heart."

" Here, don't stand staring there," said Whiffler, handing Jacob his cap, " ain't you a-goin' in for a run ? I'll bet a stony fox-eye and a lumbo to thirty commonies that I beat you at a hop, skip, and jump ;" and away went Whiffler from the back-door, up the garden path, and over the railings at the end, into the open meadows. But Jacob was too much surprised and bewildered at the events of the preceding ten minutes to run after him ; so Whiffler came back again.

" Don't get a-minding her, bless you ; she'll be as good as pie after the first round of toast, and better than duck and green peas when the school bell rings : now, ain't

you in for a lark ?—up, up, up, up, up, up,” went on this volatile youth, and every time he said “up” he leapt over his own head, concluding by striking a circus attitude and kissing the tips of his fingers first to Jacob, and then to a couple of poplar trees and six gooseberry bushes ; after which dramatic demonstration he assumed a quieter manner and conducted himself with a sort of rational consideration.


“ And are you one of the boarders ?” inquired Jacob.

“ Am I ? ain’t I ? that’s all,” answered Whiffler.

“ But are you really ?” said Jacob, doubtfully.

“ You’re another,” was all the somersault-thrower said, but he looked up into Jacob’s face with such a thoroughly good-natured smile that Jacob could not feel offended.

“ A boarder, Mister—I beg your pardon, who have I the honour of addressing—what name, sir ?” said the nimble youth, throwing his head aside, sticking his arms akimbo, and looking excessively funny.



“Jacob Martyn,” said Jacob laughing.

“Well, Mister Martyn, now I’ll tell you the sort of boarding this cheild would like. I should like, this ere werry moment, to be a-boarding of a pirate ship with two broad-swords—a phantom bark at the back, and five-and-twenty bally gals in buck musling, luminated with blue fire—that’s your time of day,” said Whiffler, with suitable pantomime; concluding his brief sketch of the height to which his ambitious hopes soared by conducting an imaginary sword encounter with an imaginary foe, and exclaiming, when the said foe was supposed to have fallen, weltering in his blood, “Death to the traitors—Old England for ever!” which patriotic and loyal sentiment he followed up by whistling “God save the Queen” in the highest key ever attempted by whistler, or Whiffler, before or since. Then, as if he had done and said nothing at all unusual, he again became something like a natural specimen of human nature, and commented thus upon the outline of fame and glory which he had drawn :

"But there ain't no such luck at present, Mister. I must be content to learn my verbs and adjectives—English grammar is the art of speaking and writing the English language with propriety. But never mind, wait a wee, as Scotchy Farlane, the Athenian Hercules, used to say, when Scotch Jessie, the Zephyr of the Arena, was a-fetching of him home from the 'Arena's Retreat—licensed to be drunk on the premises'—wait a wee!"

"You're a very queer fellow," said Jacob; "I can't make you out. But since you have asked me my name, tell me yours."

"Spenzonian Whiffler—they used to call me Spen Whiff for short, and Spen for shorter," replied the boy.

"Why, your name is as funny as yourself," said Jacob.

"Well, it belonged to a funny fellow, you see. I was christened after my great-grandfather, who turned five-and-forty somersaults at a stretch and died at Drewry Lane, through a-swallowing of a red-hot poker when a-playing Pantaloon, which he

was obliged to take up with in his old age," replied Whiffler.

"Why, he must have been mad to have done such a thing."

"What, as play Pantaloon?" inquired the descendant of the unfortunate pantomimist.

"No, no—mad to put a red-hot poker into his mouth," said Jacob.

"Nonsense; it wasn't real, of course. Don't you know?—poker wooden property, painted red at the end, sometimes used in conjuring trick, made like a telescope."

"How long have you been here, then?" inquired Jacob.

"Well, I'm a-going in sixteen now," said Whiffler, knitting his brows and losing himself for a moment apparently in deep thought—"and I made my first pot-hook when I was about fourteen."

"Where did you make it?" asked Jacob.

"In the last desk but one."

"What, here, at Cartown?"

"Rather," said Whiffler; "I never made any nowhere else."

"Where does your father live?" asked Jacob.

"I don't think I have one—at least Petroski said I hadn't, nor a mother neither."

"And who's Petroski?"

"Ah, Pet; he was the Indiarubber Wonder, and a wonder and a wonner he was too; he could do everything—the dagger trick, the globes, the stilts, the tight-rope, the bottle feat; but he left the circus and came here as clown in the 'Fairy Diamonds, or the Demons of Domingoe,' a comic Christmas pantomime performed at Cartown for a whole week, two Christmases ago; he's dead—poor Pet, poor old fellow!" said Spen Whiffler, with emotion; but he was too full of mother wit and good humour for sadness to leave more than a momentary impression upon his features—sorrow glided over his face like a cloud flitting across a sunny landscape, leaving no trace behind it.

"How did he die? What was the matter with him?" inquired Jacob, beginning to feel very much interested in his new and strange companion.

“ He died chiefly through want of breath, after playing for a week and getting no salary, the treasury being done up. Being unable to get either beef or brandy, poor Pet soon lost his breath. It didn’t matter so much about me, he used to say, I should live to be the pride of the profession ; and here I am a-learning of nouns, as if it made any difference to me whether a chair is a noun or a pronoun, or anythin’ else, for the matter of that. But I’ll try, I’ll try ; for poor old Pet cried with delight when Mr. Spawling said he would take me and teach me—Pet didn’t like the idea of me a-coming to grief as he had done. So at last he said I wasn’t to be the pride of the profession as a sprite or nothing of that sort, but as an ornament to society. Poor old Pet!—a pretty ornament I shall be.”

“ Then you have no friends,” said Jacob, with much sympathy in the tone of his voice.

“ No ; that’s it, you see, only Mr. Spawling ; and I can’t find it in my heart to run away when he is so kind to me. And

there's something else—do you believe in ghosts, Mister Jacob ?”

“Call me Jacob—not Mister, and I'll call you Spen,” said Jacob.

“Well, then, Jacob, do you believe in ghosts ?”

“No ! I never saw one,” Jacob replied.

“Well, I have,” went on Whiffler. “I'll tell you ; but it is a secret, you know. I started to run away one night—I couldn't help it—I dropped a little bundle of clothes out of the window, and then dropped myself after them. The moon was a-shining bright, and when I got to the churchyard, yonder, I saw Petroski's ghost.”

“No !” said Jacob, looking round as if he expected to see the indiarubber man bounding along behind him.

“I did, right over his grave, a-signifying with its hands that I was to go back, and not be an ungrateful rascal. I thought it was a sort of moonbeam at first ; but no—it was poor old Pet ; and I went back, and

got into the house again without disturbing anybody."

For more than two hours the two boys walked and talked, [Spen brimming over with fun and frolic, and taking an especial delight in telling the wondering boy from Middleton all the incidents of his life.

"You must know the governor, Mr. Spawling, is a bit of an actor himself—he calls it helocution," said Spen; "he was a reg'lar patron of the drama when we came down here afore poor Pet died."


"Tell me all about it," said Jacob.

"Well, you see, we wos a-playing in the country—a thief of a manager made up a sort of scratch company — half dramatic, half circus—a reg'lar mixture. When we come here he bolted; the ghost hadn't walked, as they say, for a long time. Mr. Spawling was our principal patron; he used to bring the boys and give bespeaks, and he assisted the treasury in other ways. The parson took on about Mr. S. a-doing of this, but, however, there was no time for a row. Poor old Pet was took awfully ill.

Mr. S., the governor, he soon heard this, and he come to see him ; Pet used to sing a song about a friend coming at last, but ah ! 'twas too late, and so when Mr. S., the governor, you know, comes, the poor old boy he whispers—

A friend came at last,
Who had heard of Pet's fate ;
He approached his straw pallet,
But ah ! 'twas too late.

And it was, poor dear old boy, and Mr. S., the governor, he fairly broke down, and he reg'lar cried, and leaned his head on his hand a-sobbing ; but Pet he was as cheerful as could be, and he says, ' Oh ! sir, if you would but put Spen in the way of getting his living away from the sawdust, and out of the glare of the foot-lights ! ' And Mr. S., he says, ' I will, Petroski, I will ; ' and then old Pet he sings in his dry way, as if he were a-whispering, he sings that a friend come at last, and he wasn't too late, and then by'm-by he puts out his hand to thank Mr. S., and then he goes off to sleep, and he was dead ; leaving me a worse.



orphan than ever, and a blubbering orphan as was nigh a-broken hearted."

"What a sad story!" said Jacob through his tears; "how good Mr. Spawling must be!"

"Should think he was," said Spen. "Now, no blubbering—it ain't no good—here you go up—up—up—up—up—."

Spen would have astonished the little arab tumblers of the London streets; he bounded along the roads as if he were in a well sawdusted circus. At the very edge of Cartown Dale he pulled up to tell Jacob that this valley reminded him of nothing so much as a scene in a London pantomime, in which he had played a sprite for so many nights running that he could not tell how many.


But never in any theatre, except in Nature's playhouse, had there been such a scene as that valley of Cartown which opened up at the feet of Jacob and Whiffler; a valley studded with alabaster rocks jutting out from clumps of green foliage, with a rippling river running down the centre, and

a white road that went winding away by the side of the brook till both were lost in a wood.

"This is what I like," said Jacob; "is it not grand? Don't you feel as if you could leap with joy and fly over to the other side, or roll down into the brook below?"

"Ah, that would be a trick! You would make a fortune in a twelvemonth if you could do that. Mr. Spawling should ride in his carriage, and I'd build a monument to Pet as high as the church, and I'd pay for no end of people to go into no end of circuses and theatres," was Spen's reply.

Jacob thereupon felt a vague sort of conscious superiority to Spen, who did not appreciate his enthusiastic admiration of the gorgeous scene before them. While Jacob was up in the sky of wonder, Whiffler was in the ring among the sawdust. At least some such thought passed through Jacob's mind; and yet the two boys mutually felt, as only boys could feel, on so short an acquaintance, a deep sympathy with each



other. Before they reached home again they were fast friends.

And when they did reach home again, as they now called Spawling's School? Well, everything was in astonishing order. The wrathful magician had released the chairs and tables, and brought down the bumptious little card-table from the sideboard ; and in fact everything was the pink of neatness. Cups and saucers shone on a large quantity of white tablecloth : Mr. Spawling was sitting in his arm-chair reading a book ; and Dorothy was cutting a pile of white bread and butter, and watching at the same time an hour-glass, from the top to the bottom of which the sand was running in a little golden stream.

Whiffler (after changing his Harlequin jacket for a loose blouse) took his seat meekly at the bottom of the table. Dorothy requested Jacob to sit on the other side, at the corner near Mr. Spawling, who looked up and said he hoped Spenny had shown Master Martyn the beauties of the country, and that he had not been guilty of any

absurd tricks. Jacob said his companion had been very kind.

Accompanied by some other commonplace remarks, breakfast was finished; shortly after which Whiffler quietly disappeared, and almost immediately the school-bell began to ring, so furiously at first that it was quite startling; but gradually it became slower and slower, and softer and softer, until at last it died out in a quiet murmur; whereupon Mr. Spawling put down his book, and the master and the new pupil went to school.





CHAPTER X.¹


MR. GREGORY SPAWLING AS AN EDUCATOR.

IN the days of the first public school at Cartown education was generally regarded as a privilege only intended for those who could afford the time and money necessary to be expended upon it. The Education Act had been dreamed of by a few maniacs, who contended that every child was the rightful heir to knowledge ; but these dangerous persons had little or no influence, though they were getting the thin end of the wedge into the constitution by means of British and National Schools, which provided cheap learning in some of the large manufacturing towns. The Cartown school,

started by Mr. Spawling, with the aid of a local committee, was a wonderful advance for the northern division of the Midland mining county, though many of the people of Cartown regarded Mr. Spawling as a mild kind of lunatic, who could do little harm or good, and who was at the same time a kind-hearted man and loved the poor.

As many other persons, matters, and things are crowding into my canvas, and presenting themselves for recognition, I must leave the reader to imagine the character and capacity of the public school at Cartown, premising by the way that Jacob was Mr. Spawling's only boarder, and that the advertisement which the schoolmaster sent to Middleton was the first announcement Mr. Spawling had made of his intention to receive boarders.

The pupils were a happy family. Mr. Spawling tried to teach them to think as well as to read and write and work out elaborate arithmetical problems. He made himself the personal friend of every indi-



vidual boy ; he was an excellent judge of character ; he gauged the capacities of his scholars separately ; and in his way was a model schoolmaster.


Spen Whiffler was the low comedy boy, the merriman, the Touchstone of the school. He could draw as many funny things on his slate as he could cut queer capers in the play-ground. Once he had had a fight with the tall boy who came from a long distance every day to school, in company with a bag of books and a particularly plain luncheon ; during the encounter the tall boy had not once been able to hit Spen, while Spen, on the other hand, contrived to knock his man down ; and when his man was down, Spen turned a somersault over his prostrate form, and then posing himself dramatically with one foot upon the tall boy's body, crowed loudly like a cock, upon which the tall boy from the country could not restrain his laughter, and a lasting friendship was thereupon cemented. Jacob had this story from the tall boy's cousin.

One day at school was very much like

another. All the year round the reading, and writing, and ciphering, and spelling, and dictation went on with little variety, save now and then when the master delivered a short lecture from his desk, or the "mapping day" came round, as it did every first and last Friday in every month.

One of the most agreeable things for the pupils on mapping day was a general permission to go into the yard to mix Indian ink at the pump. There was a mysterious charm attending these brief moments of leisure outside the school just before the bell rang for departure. The hum of the school coming through the windows increased the sense of quiet without, and seemed to enhance the freedom of the time. Mapping was a branch of education in which only a few of the elder boys were instructed, and it was carried on in a special little room behind the master's desk.

This room communicated with the yard, in which there was a pump with a leaden spout. The water was always turned on.




It made a continual pleasant pattering music as it fell into a trough. When Jacob and Spen were here together, the Indian ink, used for making the mountains and rivers in "The Land of Palestine" and "The British Islands," and the Prussian blue for colouring the sea to the extent of half an inch all round these said countries, required more mixing than usual, the operation being varied by Spen's tricks and witty sayings. But if Spen began these ten minutes as merriman or Touchstone, he frequently became more like Jacques than the wearer of the cap and bells, before the ink was considered sufficiently black for the little wavy rivers, and the blue became sufficiently blue for the half-inch sea. More than once he sat on the edge of the trough, and wondered where everybody would be in ten years, and especially whether, after that lapse of time, he would be mixing ink to map the Nile on a sheet of cartridge paper, or whether he would be mixing colour to blacken his own eyebrows and to redden his own cheeks.

After school hours, Mr. Gregory Spawling and Jacob frequently made long excursions into the country. The schoolmaster would stimulate the boy's natural love of the beautiful by explanations of form and colour, and remarks upon the picturesque in nature and in art. His own particular views were often supported with apt quotations from Shakespeare and the old dramatists. The incomparable bard always found a clever, ingenious, and loving interpreter in Mr. Spawling, who evidently knew him by heart.

The schoolmaster, very early during the friendship which was established between himself and Jacob, gave his pupil a glimpse into his history, a cue to the reflective character of his mind, and his comparatively humble position in Cartown.

"How is it now," said the schoolmaster, "that smoke, which is usually offensive (you will have noted it at Middleton), should be accounted a picturesque and beautiful addition to a landscape as we see it now?"



"It has a beautiful appearance here, sir," said Jacob.

"With what a grace it mounts upwards, and spreads like an ethereal mist over the foliage!"

"And the colour, sir, is almost like the sky yonder—smoke is very different at Middleton."

"It not only pleases the eye, Jacob; it induces a sensation of quiet, satisfied pleasure, which the landscape would not alone invoke. Do you perceive that, Jacob?"


"I think I do, sir; I hardly know why. I like to see the smoke among the trees."

"Is it not because you connect it in your mind with the cottage below?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Nor I, Jacob; but I think we are on the right track in that thought at least; and I want you to remember this little incident, as an example for the future to inquire into the reasons why any particular thing gives you pleasure. Look below the surface; it will accustom you to analyse your feelings, and give you as much pleasure as profit. Now

my opinion about this wreath of smoke on the tree tops is that there is more of the practical than the poetical about it—more of the physical than the spiritual. There is an inherent love of home among us English; and I think that, in addition to the picturesque bit of colour which it waves above the trees, we associate the smoke with the comfortable hearth at the foot of the chimney whence it rises; we link with it, if I may so speak, that traditional idea of the purest love, the most complete happiness, being found in a cottage, where there is no ambition beyond the possession of the common necessities of life and an honest name. Beware of ambition, Jacob; beware of building your hopes on one object, be that object what it may; and remember that the blessings of contentment—the greatest blessings in this world—are more frequently found in a humble cottage such as that among the trees below us than in the mansions of the great and wealthy. This is not mere book philosophy, Jacob. I have seen the world; I know every trick of it.



Most of us have our troubles, Jacob, sooner or later. I have had mine ; some day we may talk of them for your own benefit."

From these evening walks Spen was for some time excluded. Whether it was out of deference to Jacob, who was to be looked upon with more consideration than Spen, or whether Dorothy wanted Spen to run errands, I cannot say ; but when Jacob asked that Spen might accompany them the schoolmaster seemed pleased at the request and complied with it immediately. And so these three had long happy walks together in the evenings, and upon these occasions Spen conducted himself with great propriety, never doing anything in the tumbling way, beyond *thinking* of the ring, the sawdust, and the theatre.

One evening, instead of a ramble, Mr. Spawling invited the two boys into his own room, a mark of the very greatest consideration. The schoolmaster's sanctum adjoined Mr. Spawling's bedroom, and was regarded by Dorothy as all but sacred. The schoolmaster dusted his own books, and arranged

his own papers ; so that Dorothy should have no excuse for touching anything beyond the ordinary furniture when she engaged in her periodical house-cleaning. The room looked orderly and comfortable, nevertheless. The furniture consisted, in chief, of a table, on which lay several books and manuscripts ; a well-filled set of bookshelves ; a small stand sacred to a bust of Shakespeare ; a fat arm-chair ; two other chairs from the bedroom—one for Jacob and one for Spen ; and an old-fashioned sofa. Several water-colour drawings and engravings adorned the walls. There were portraits of three several gentlemen in the three several characters of Hamlet, Coriolanus, and Romeo. Near these hung the pictures of two ladies, one as Desdemona and the other as Rosalind. Jacob did not know who these persons were, and indeed did not know whether the last mentioned was intended for a boy or a young lady, and he did not ask. Mr. Gregory Spawling knew, and Spenzonian Whiffler knew—had not Spen seen many ladies dressed as

boys, both in the circus and in the theatre? But even Spen Whiffler, who was so learned in these matters, did not know that the water-colour drawing was a portrait of Mr. Gregory Spawling, and that when he played Romeo he was to have been married to the young lady who played Juliet, and that she died two days before the one fixed for the wedding. Indeed, nobody in Cartown, or Middleton, or all through the Midland Counties, north and south, knew this. Even the school committee knew nothing of it, because Mr. Gregory Spawling had been recommended to them by a lord, a real live lord, who had said nothing about Mr. Spawling having been an actor, but had spoken of him in the highest terms in which one man could speak of another, especially when the one speaking is a lord and the other an ordinary mortal. But it is hardly right to call Mr. Spawling (there was a different name under the portrait of the actor as Romeo) an ordinary mortal. He had been a leader in his profession. Admired, flattered, followed, he had filled a large

space in the world's esteem. He had been the observed of all observers. It was no ordinary mortal that could step down from this pedestal and under a new name settle down in the capacity of a country schoolmaster at Cartown.

Jacob and Spen had a delightful evening with their master, who read to them from his choicest books. The gems of some prose works having been discussed, the schoolmaster took up the Bible, and read from the Psalms, but with a touching pathos, and a perfect grace of elocution which made the Song of Solomon a very different thing to what Jacob had been accustomed to consider it; while "Proverbs" in the mouth of Mr. Spawling was poetry indeed. Spen afterwards asked if Mr. Spawling would be kind enough to read from Shakespeare, whereupon the schoolmaster brought forth a thick volume, the pages of which were marked with many notes. He read from "As You Like It," calling Jacob's attention to the perfect beauty of its descriptions of scenery, and instancing how the poet had

often said more in one line than they had said in all their conversations. To Spen he pointed out the real humour of Touchstone, showing him that fun did not consist in standing upside-down or in making queer grimaces. And then he read the famous soliloquy of Jacques, and the song of Amiens in the same act, whereupon Spen remembered Petroski, and Jacob thought of Susan, a traveller on the broad ocean.

“Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp,
As friend remembered not.”

“There is another friend whom I have not remembered,” said Jacob when he was taking off his boots in the kitchen.

“Oh, indeed, and who may that be?” inquired Dorothy, accompanying her interrogation with the music of two knitting needles.

“Who may who be?” asked Jacob.

“The other friend you have forgotten.”

“Did I say I had forgotten one?”

“Of course you did.”

“I did not intend to say so,” said Jacob.

“Only a-rehearsing of your own thoughts, Jacob, eh?” said Spen.

“That was all,” Jacob replied.

“Well, good night; the best of friends must sever—I cannot always be with you—ajoo! ajoo!” said Spen, his left hand theatrically covering his eyes, and his right grasping a long candlestick with a short six in it. “Good night—exit Whiffler.”

“You’re a strange boy, Master Jacob,” said Dorothy as Spen disappeared, “to be talking about somebody and not to know you was.”

“But I did know,” said Jacob, “and yet I do not know the friend—is not that odd? I have seen her many times, and yet I do not know her.”

“Her, *her*—oh, that’s it, is it, Master Jacob?” Dorothy elevated the first finger of her right hand and laughed.

“Yes, her, *her*, Dorothy—oh, if you only knew her!—

“Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp,
As friend remembered not ;”

and away Jacob marched to the staircase.

"Why, I declare you will soon be as bad as Whiffler. Well, I told master he'd contaminate any boarders as come here, with his nonsense. But talking of friends, Jacob, and *hers*, I am going, or hope to go, to see some on Saturday and stay till Monday. And if I might make so bold as to ask you home with me for two days"——

"What, among the trees yonder, Dorothy?"

"Yes, where Will Tunster took me up."

"I should like it amazingly," said Jacob.

"I have took the liberty to ask master already, and you see I can go better with taking you than if you stayed behind, because of the work. You won't mind leaving Spen for two days, eh? I promise you a nice companion."

"I do not care for a companion," said Jacob.

"Oh! of course not," said Dorothy.
"You aren't old enough to be in love, or I should think you was."

“ Love !” said Jacob, laughing ; “ good-night, Dorothy ;” and the image of a beautiful face, looking out of a factory window, floated a second time into Jacob’s memory with the song of Amiens.





CHAPTER XI.

IN WHICH JACÓB MAKES A BLISSFUL
DISCOVERY.

WHEN Saturday morning arrived Spen volunteered to walk a little way with Jacob and Mr. Spawling's housekeeper, just to see them on their way, as he said. Dorothy's home was only a few miles on the road. Jacob remembered it well. Nothing in that first memorable journey from Middleton could ever be blotted from his memory.

It was a grey autumn morning. The first dead leaves had fallen. They were lying on the road, with big drops of dew upon them, like tears. There was a settled calm in the air, a death-like stillness. The

year was beginning to die. You could not help getting this thought into your mind on such a morning.

"Why, what a solemn lot we are," said Spen; "we might be a-going to a funeral; we should just be the sort to come on with the coffin in 'Richard the Third.'"

"We do seem dull," said Dorothy, "as if something was going to happen."

"Something is," said Jacob.

"What?" asked Dorothy, stopping in the middle of the road.

"The year is going to die," said Jacob.

"Lor' bless us! how you do startle one!" said Dorothy.

"It's the sort of morning that gives you the shivers, like the slow dithering music before the villain enters, or when he's groping about the stage with a dark lantern and a dagger," said Spen.

The merriman of the Cartown school illustrated his remarks. He bent his head, and felt his way about the road in imaginary darkness.

Jacob was amused at Spen's acting, but

he pulled him up soon afterwards by telling him that it was on an autumn day when his mother died.

"Oh, just like to-day, was it?" said Spen. "Tell us about it; I never had a mother except old Petroski the clown, and he was father and mother and a whole family to me."

"No; let us talk of something else," said Jacob. "I thought all the world was dead when my mother died; the sun set early in the day, and there were no stars, and the next morning the leaves were lying in the road."

"Bravo!" said Spen, solemnly; "you would do for leading business—Hamlet, or the fellow who has run away from his wife, which her name was Haller," said Spen.

"Well, you are a rum pair," said Dorothy, contemplating the two boys with wondering astonishment.


"Let us talk of something lively," said Jacob. "Give us a somersault or set us a back, Spen."

"I could't do it, as the gedleman in the

stocks said, when they told him to blow his doze," replied Spen, suddenly suffering from a very severe cold in the head.

"Then give us a recitation," said Jacob.

Spen, pulling a lock of hair over his forehead, and assuming a serio-comic attitude, said his dabe was Dorbal on the Grambian hills, and that if 'twere done it were well it were done quickly; for there stood Eliza on the wood-crown'd height, and all the world was a stage, the men and women merely a weak device of the enemy; and after he had said many other similarly extraordinary things, making Dorothy laugh until she was red in the face, he thought it was time he should return; whereupon he shook hands with Jacob and Dorothy. Taking out his handkerchief and wiping very dry tears from each eye, he begged them to remember that if cruel fortune should part them, it might be for years and it might be for never, his heart would still be breaking for the love of Betsy Jane, and his will would be found in Miss Dorothy's



cheenie tea-pot, among that respectable housekeeper's curl-papers.

Then solemnly extending his arms towards his enthusiastic audience of two, Spen exclaimed, "Bless ye, my children; bless ye!" and disappeared through an adjacent hedge.

Dorothy and Jacob continued their walk past cornfields and through meadows, by woods and by rivers. On the highway they met parties of reapers, chiefly Irishmen, carrying reaping-hooks tied up in straw-bands; country people going on village errands; tramps who had footed it over nearly every turnpike road in England; and other members of the great army of strollers which is for ever journeying hither and thither on the highways and byways of Britain.

In an obscure cross-road they passed a gipsy encampment, and Jacob thought of his smoke lesson as a white wreath ascended from one of the canvas tents and went sailing away over a sea of green and amber leaves. Jacob was destined to know

something more than the mere picturesque side of gipsy life ; but he recked not of his destiny as he passed on admiring the landscape. Near the gipsy tents the road was crossed by a shallow brook which came out of the wood and reflected the shaggy dogs and dark-eyed children who stood on the bank and watched Dorothy and Jacob cross the bridge.

A pleasant walk of half an hour brought the visitors in sight of Dorothy's cottage.

"I shouldn't be surprised if your memory was taxed just now," said Dorothy, referring to Jacob's mysterious reference to the song of Amiens, after his evening in Mr. Spawling's room.

"How?" asked Jacob.

"Didn't you say her hair was like the yellow silk at the factory?"

"Well?"

"And her face was round and laughing like a fairy's, though I never see a fairy myself."

"Well?"



“And when you first saw her she was like a hangel?”

“Well? Yes, yes,” continued Jacob.

“And she looked out of the factory window?”

“Ah, but we are a long way from Middleton-in-the-Water,” said Jacob.

“And mayn’t somebody else be a long way from Middleton?” said Dorothy, with tantalising emphasis.

“I fear not,” said Jacob. “What do you mean, Dorothy?”

“And you said she sang—oh, I don’t know how beautifully you said she could sing.”

“Well,” said Jacob, “what are you going to say?”

“What am I going to say? Listen. Is *that* as good as the factory angel’s singing?” As Dorothy opened the little gate at the entrance of the garden behind the house, the sweet sounds of a girlish voice came through the open doorway.

“It is! it is!” exclaimed Jacob, seizing Dorothy by the arm.

"Lor', how you pinch; for goodness' sake, leave go."

Jacob, however, detained Mr. Spawling's housekeeper, as the music might have done had she not been anxious to see her cousin. But their voices had already been heard. The singing ceased and the factory angel came to the door. That moment Jacob felt as if all his dearest hopes were realised. All the longing sensations of that last morning in his father's garden came back to him. This boy of seventeen had for years been unwittingly drifting into love with somebody's voice, and here was that somebody before him, and far more beautiful than his own ideal creation.

"This is Master Martyn, Lucy," said Dorothy. The fairy putting out her hand Jacob floated into the house. He certainly did not walk in. It was all a dream. He should wake immediately and find himself at Cartown in bed, or lying by the river and picturing the big towns on its banks, miles away from Middleton and Cartown.

"And how's father?" said Dorothy, sitting down opposite an old woman who was seated when they entered.

"Well, John baint ower well — he's abed, and has been these two days," said Dorothy's mother, an old woman of seventy.

Dorothy must go up-stairs to see him, and Mrs. Cantrill, after telling Jacob to make himself at home, and saying how proud she was to see him, followed her daughter, leaving Jacob and Lucy together.

"Do you like Cartown, Master Martyn?" said Lucy, in a soft voice, after a rather awkward pause.

"I do, miss," said Jacob, his voice trembling.

"Better than Middleton?" inquired Lucy, as she busied herself about some household duties.

"In some respects," said Jacob, in a nervous whisper.

"You seem tired," said Lucy; "shall I get you a little ale?"

"Thank you," said Jacob, and Jacob's

goddess, his dream, his ideal of all that was lovely, disappeared behind a pantry door, and presently came back with a foaming jug of brown ale. Jacob held his glass while the cottage beauty filled it.


"I am sure you are very tired," said Lucy, noticing Jacob's unsteady hand.

"Not very, thank you," said Jacob, his face all aglow.

"The beer will do you good," said the fairy, frothing the boy's glass, and showing off to perfection a white round arm that might have been modelled for a study of classic beauty.

Poor Jacob! his heart beat wildly. Lucy, on the contrary, was quite self-possessed. She did not know that Jacob was the little fellow whom she had occasionally noticed in the garden near the Middleton factory. She knew nothing of the selection he had made among the factory voices, ticketing it in his memory with a motto from her favourite hymn—

"There is a happy land,
Far, far away."



"Will you excuse me?" said Lucy. "I am going into the garden to gather a few apples."

"Certainly," said Jacob.

He tried to say, "May I come with you?" but found himself altogether unequal to such a courageous flight of familiarity.

Jacob saw Lucy go out. His eyes never strayed away from her. He made up his mind more than once to rush out and assist her, but he still sat in the cottage sipping the foaming ale.

Just budding into womanhood, Lucy was indeed a model of healthy beauty. She might have sat for Hebe, or any other lovely creature. Fair round arms, with dimples at the elbows, and a slight dimple everywhere where there is generally a projection on the hand, it might have been the arm of our first mother that Jacob watched plucking the apples and dropping them into a small woollen apron. The pretty foot and ankle, in grey hose and rather thick shoes, peeping from beneath a white petticoat, were not to be disguised by homely

worsted or leather. And the wealth of wavy hair that would come undone and fall in golden ripples over shoulders which, despite the dark print dress that covered them, you might be sure were white as lilies are ; and the white and red, vying for the mastery in that sweet fair face, and the bright grey eyes, sparkling with health !— what would not grand city ladies have given to carry such rosy colour and such natural brightness into their ball-rooms ? Why, Lucy Cantrill would have driven a whole city full of young fellows mad, let alone Jacob Martyn, who had heard her sing for years, and was in love with her before he saw her face.

“ Ah, bless her, there she be !” said Mrs. Cantrill, her aunt, as she entered the room again with Dorothy, and observed Lucy in the garden. “ She grows more beautiful every hour of the day. Lord ha’ mercy on her !”

“ You make too much of her, mother ; you’ll spoil her if you don’t mind,” said Dorothy ; but Jacob thought otherwise,

and when the apples were dished up at dinner in the shape of dumplings, as round and hard as the clouds in some of the old masters, Jacob summoned courage enough to pay Lucy a compliment.

"I did not make the dumplings," said Lucy; "I cannot cook."

"You gathered the apples," said Jacob, at which, for the first time, Lucy blushed, while Dorothy and the old woman laughed heartily.

In the afternoon Jacob, and Lucy, and Dorothy walked in the wood, and Dorothy told Lucy about Jacob listening to her singing in the factory, and how she had learnt from him the particulars of his seeing Lucy on the morning when he left home. She even told Lucy how Jacob had described her; and although Lucy laughed and pretended to make fun of it, and although Jacob treated Dorothy's gossip lightly, and pretended that he wished her not to say any more, Jacob felt that Dorothy was placing him under an eternal obligation for telling Lucy how he had fallen in love

with her ; and Lucy was not displeased either. What pretty girl could have been displeased at such an ingenuous narration ?

“How do you get on with Dorothy ; don’t you find her very cross sometimes ?” said Lucy, changing the subject and putting her arm through her cousin’s.

“We get on very well indeed,” said Jacob.

“On cleaning days ?” asked Lucy, laughing.

“Now, none of your impudence, Pussy,” said Dorothy ; “everybody has their weakness, haven’t they, Jacob ?”

Jacob laughed, and said he supposed he had his, and the little rivulet that ran by his side seemed to say it also had its weakness, which was to go on for ever chattering over stones and gliding over mosses. Then the path became too narrow for three to walk together ; so Dorothy fell behind Jacob and Lucy, and thought “what a nice pair they would make !”

There was something noble in Jacob’s appearance, boy as he was. Since his ill-

ness he had grown rapidly. He was slightly taller than Lucy, though of slender build. There was a marked contrast between his dark, thoughtful features, and the fair, hopeful, and merry face of Lucy. She wore a straw hat, and a shawl hung carelessly over one shoulder. The conversation between her and Jacob was very limited, so much so that Dorothy said they seemed afraid of each other, and wished Spen had come all the way with them, whereupon Jacob turned his head and tried to be facetious upon Dorothy's weakness for cleaning and talking. By-and-by he felt more at home, and at length he told Lucy how he had lain in the sun listening to the factory music, and how he had often wished he had been compelled to work in the factory; for it seemed to him that there was such a glory in the rattling wheels, such a freedom about the place, such a pleasure in watching the silk grow into yards and yards of fleecy cloth.

"Ah, you are mistaken, Mr. Martyn," said Lucy; "you might like the factory on

cold winter afternoons, when the snow is on the ground ; but in the early morning, in the dark, before the stars are out !”

Lucy shrugged her pretty shoulders, and looked at Jacob.

“ And then,” she continued, “ in the summer, when the birds are singing, the heat and noise, the stifling dreadful heat !—not that I was compelled to stay in it always, but I saw those who were.”

“ And yet you sang as if you were very happy,” said Jacob.

“ Larks sing in cages, but I don’t think they are happy.”

“ You often made me happy,” said Jacob ; “ but if I had thought you were not happy, I should have been very miserable.”

“ I was not unhappy,” said Lucy ; “ I did almost what I pleased ; the proprietor of the factory was very kind ; he is a sort of relation of ours.”

“ And have you left Middleton for good ?” Jacob asked.

“ I think so,” said Lucy.

“ You were glad to come away ?”

"Yes, I think so ; but sometimes I feel as if I were sorry."

"How strange that you should have left so soon after I left, and that I should come here !"

"Very," said Lucy.

Then Jacob looked back into the wood, and Dorothy was nowhere to be seen. The good-natured creature, muttering to herself that "two is company and three none," had quietly slipped home. Jacob made a great effort to use his opportunity bravely.

"It seems as if it had happened purposely," said Jacob.

"Do you think so ?" said Lucy. "Why?"

"Because I feel as if I had known you ever since I was a little boy."

"You are not so bashful as you were an hour or two ago," said Lucy, smiling.

"You thought me very silly, I know," said Jacob ; "and do so now, I dare say."

"I do not, I assure you," said Lucy, gathering her shawl round her, as they stepped forth into the open meadows.

"Should you be dreadfully offended if I


were to call you Lucy ?" said Jacob, taking her hand.

Lucy withdrew her hand.

"I knew you would ; I am very sorry I asked you ; pray forgive me if I have offended you," said Jacob.

"I am not offended," Lucy replied ; "here is Cousin Dorothy coming to meet us."

It was twilight when they returned to the cottage among the trees. They chatted together until it was nearly dark. Mrs. Cantrill sat in her arm-chair near the fire. Dorothy occupied a seat near the open door, and Jacob sat near Lucy against the window. The firelight flickered on the white-washed walls. There was a wholesome smell of tar from the recently blackened fire-grate, which made the place seem very homely. A few bright pans hung over a white dresser, and an old-fashioned clock, in an oaken case, ticked solemnly and peacefully in a corner behind Mrs. Cantrill. Outside the house the trees looked dim and shadowy. The cry of the landrail came in



at the open doorway, almost keeping time with the clock. The ivy tapped at the diamond-shaped window-panes. A cat purred on the hearth. You could hear the drowsy hum of the beetle, and a robin sat singing on the garden wall.

Lucy knew that Jacob loved her. When she went into her little room that night, she looked into her glass with a smile of satisfaction, and gathered her hair up and tried the effect of wearing it in a band. Then she let it fall in a cluster down her back, brushed it off her face entirely, finally fastening it up with a comb; and, however she dressed those golden tresses, she looked like one of whom the poet could not choose but feel that she had reason to fear her own exceeding beauty.

“Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness.”



CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH SUNDRY STRAY THREADS OF THE
STORY ARE GATHERED UP, AND SOME COM-
ING EVENTS CAST THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE.



WHEN Jacob returned to Cartown, he found a letter and a newspaper for him, which, by the way, was not an extraordinary circumstance, seeing that he had received many communications from his father containing words of parental kindness and solicitude, besides a *Middleton Star*, every week. This morning both letter and newspaper were more noteworthy than usual. The letter informed Jacob that his father would call for him that day, on his way to Clumberside, which was the seat of Mr.

Bonsall, M.P., who had been returned to the Commons House of Parliament for the borough of Middleton, through the instrumentality of Mr. Martyn, of the *Star*. In the newspaper there were several items of local news, interesting both to Jacob and to the readers of this history. Perhaps a brief description of the journal itself may not be out of place here.

It was a large folio paper, the front page chiefly occupied with advertisements. Several auctioneers monopolised the first two columns, with announcements of forthcoming sales of all manner of extraordinary things, from kitchen chairs to magnificently carved mahogany sideboards, from cottages to family mansions, and from collections of poultry to herds of fat stock. There was a slight error, called by printers "a literal," in the description of the poultry, "twenty-five turkeys" being printed "twenty-five turnkeys;" but this was a mistake that might occur in the best-regulated printing offices. In the third column several grocers, a couple of tailors, and seven or

eight drapers struggled with each other for supremacy, and according to their announcements, teas, sugars, dress-coats, silks, ribbons, bonnets, shawls, and cloaks, at Middleton-in-the-Water, had reached the minimum of cheapness, combined with the very maximum of quality. In the fourth column a brace of enterprising druggists announced themselves as the sole agents for certain wonderful medicines; and, beneath these, Dr. Horatio Johnson, beginning with the quotation, "Throw physic to the dogs," and ending with "*Moniti meliora sequamur*," informed the afflicted of all ages that he visited certain towns on certain days, and that the Oriental remedy had proved its efficacy by the most convincing and extraordinary tests. In the fifth column several persons who wanted situations elbowed sundry others who had situations vacant; while half a dozen announcements headed "To be Sold" made desperate efforts to eclipse in attractiveness an equal number of others under the title of "To be Let;" and the page finished with a collection of miscel-

laneous intelligence. In the second page commenced the leading articles, in the preparation of which it was evident, even to Jacob, that Mr. Martyn had procured some literary assistance. The first article was a severe criticism of the *Middleton Guardian*, from which it appeared that the organ of the Red party had for several years devoted its special attention to a consideration of the errors of the British currency system, the heinous crime committed by those persons who clipped and mutilated the coin of the realm, and the condition of the savage tribes of Africa and America. The next article—a description of the mineral wealth of the country surrounding Middleton—concluded by welcoming the advent of a new company started to get lead at a short distance from the town ; and the last was one, the brevity of which induces me to extract it as an example of the independent character of the journal and the susceptibility of the Middleton Corporation :—

" FEARFUL CALAMITY: THE 'STAR' IN DANGER.—We can hardly find words to describe the calamity which has befallen us. The remarks we made last week respecting the careless and disgraceful management—or rather *mismanagement*—of the corporation property, and the culpable neglect of our corporate body in respect thereof, has brought down upon us the thundering anathemas of the Council. But this is not the worst. Our very existence is threatened. The fiat that is to annihilate us has gone forth. The writing is on the wall. Twelve Town Councillors have stopped our paper! Twelve representatives of the burgesses of the free town of Middleton have given us notice that we are no longer to count them as subscribers to this journal! Twelve four-pennies per week are banished from our exchequer!!! If we can survive this expression of the opinion of Councildom for another week, our circulation may possibly be less next Saturday by five than it is at the present issue!!! Oppressed by this dreadful weight, this shadow of the Cyclops, this co-operated condemnation, we fear the

Star will cease to shine and that we must hide our diminished head for ever. An aggregate of four shillings per week from twelve Town Councillors ! It is a deadly blow, truly. . . . But (joking apart) we may inform our readers, in confidence, that the *Star* will be printed as usual next week, notwithstanding, and that the profits of the extra sale, which will be created by the conspiracy we now chronicle, will be given to a fund which the editor suggests should be raised to pay the expenses of a public examination of the corporation accounts by a public accountant."

Following the leaders came the local news, beginning with short paragraphs, and ending with very long ones. Among those of medium size the following attracted Jacob's attention :—

"THE NEW MAYOR.—It is now generally understood that Ephraim Magar, Esq., will be chosen Chief Magistrate of Middleton at the next election. Though we are opposed to Mr. Magar on political

grounds, we cannot withhold an expression of our approval of this election. So far as Mr. Magar's connection with the Council is concerned he is comparatively only a young member ; but he has exhibited a desire to promote the welfare of the town, and he is among those of our enlightened townsmen who desire to reform altogether the present management of the corporate property. It is not on this account, however, that Mr. Magar is to be elected Mayor. But more in consideration of the spirited and liberal way in which he has fulfilled his duties as a Councillor, heading munificently every subscription raised for benevolent purposes, and showing, in a variety of ways, that having the means to be benevolent he has also the will. Mr. Magar is one of those men who is the founder of his own fortune, and as such it is highly creditable to his colleagues in office that they should select him for the high and honourable position of Chief Magistrate. We hear that Mr. Magar is a large shareholder in the new lead mining undertaking, that he is also a sleeping partner in several local works, and that he intends retiring

from the business with which he has so many years been connected, and enjoying, for the remainder of his life, that repose which he has so well earned."

Another paragraph ran as follows:—

"GRATIFYING TESTIMONIAL.—We are glad to announce that Thomas Titsy, who our readers will remember was imprisoned on a charge of having intimidated certain voters during the last election for Middleton, has been presented with a purse of fifty sovereigns by several gentlemen who were instrumental in obtaining his release, as an expression of their sympathy, and in token of their confidence in his honesty and integrity. Mr. Thomas Titsy, who has served his apprenticeship in this office, desires us to express his sense of the kindness and sympathy exhibited towards him; and we may add our own testimonial to the substantial one he has received, with regard to his faithfulness and good conduct. The subscription was commenced shortly after Thomas Titsy's release: its presentation has been delayed, that it might in no way

smack of anything like political partisanship. The testimonial has been presented on purely philanthropic grounds."

In the next page there was an account of an interesting discussion, at a meeting of the Commissioners of Lighting and Paving, respecting the width of one of the public streets, the respective merits of closed and open drains, as opposed to no drains at all, and the price of gas, which one speaker contended was higher than the cost of oil.

"He for one would not say anything against the illuminating powers of gas ; but he would say this, that when the good old oil lamps were in use, there was much less money to pay for them, and much less fuss about the quality of the light and the number of burning hours. He was one of the old school, and although he liked progress, he did not like humbug—(Hear, hear)—and what was more, he would not have humbug ; and he proposed that they should have no more to do with this new-fangled light, but order forth the old oil-lamps—(laughter)—and defy the ghastly innovation

altogether.' (Hear, and laughter.) The motion was not agreed to."

Following this, came the foreign news of the week, and the "General Intelligence." The last page began with a short poem extracted from the work of a well-known poet, and then came numerous paragraphs under the title of "Varieties;" following which was a description of "A Tour Outside Middleton," and a condensed account of a lecture on minerals; the whole ending with the publisher's imprint, until they arrived at which, it is said, many readers never halted in the perusal of their favourite paper.

During the pleasant part of the day, the interval after dinner and before the commencement of school, Spen Whiffler, who had welcomed Jacob back again, early in the morning, with great manifestations of delight, invited his friend to join him in a short walk, that he might have an opportunity of telling him an important secret.

"If it is a very great secret, Spen, you

had better not tell me," said Jacob, "because I really cannot promise that I can keep it."

"Oh, bother, but you must keep it. You ain't a woman. It's only women that can't keep secrets."

"Indeed?"


"Yes; a secret to a woman is such an awful sort of thing, that she is obliged to get the assistance of every other woman she knows to help her to keep it, and such a pack of feminines at last get hold of it that at last the secret is as common as sawdust."

"You don't seem to have a very high opinion of women, Spen," said Jacob.

"Oh, haven't I though, neither? When lovely woman stoops to folly, uncertain, coy, and hard to please; kindness in woman, not their beauteous looks, shall win my love—Shakespeare, etc.," said Spen, raising aloft his right arm, and exclaiming, "Not a high opinion? Why, I loves 'em all."

"What a queer fellow you are, Spen."

"I think you have made the observation afore. But let us to business. Prompter,



ring up. Now for the secret. 'Shall I begin?"

"Yes, go on—I will keep your secret."

"You swear?" said Spen. "Say, *I swear.*"

"I swear," said Jacob, laughing;" where-upon Spen, in a sepulchral voice, repeated, "*S-w-e-a-r,*" and stalked solemnly in front of Jacob, in imitation of the ghost in "Hamlet."

"Come, Spen, no more nonsense; begin," said Jacob, who was becoming a little anxious, wondering if Spen had seen some pretty face through a window. Momentarily the thought crossed his mind that Spen had seen Lucy, and then the blood rushed into his face, and he repeated impatiently, "Now, Spen, begin."

"Well, then, I *am* to be the pride of the profession. I *am* to be a player. The drama is to be my game, and I am a-studying of Shakespeare with Mr. Spawling," exclaimed Spen, his eyes flashing with exultation. "I'll tell you all about it. The night you went away, Mr. Spaw-

ling asked me into his room, and read to me out of the big book ; and when he saw that I liked it as well as Scotchy Farlane used to like his gin-and-water, he says, says he, ' Now, Spen Whiffler, I'm going to have a little talk to you.' ' Yes, sir,' says I. ' Well,' says he, ' you are fond of acting.' ' Very, sir,' says I. ' And you feel as though you cared about no other profession ?' ' I am sorry to say I do, sir,' says I. ' Well,' says he, ' I have thought about all this for a long time, and I have come to the conclusion to instruct you in the art.' ' *You*, sir ?' says I. ' *Me*,' says he. ' We will read together,' says he, ' and if, within a reasonable time, you continue in the same mind, and I think you capable of sustaining a part with credit, I will get you an engagement.' ' Oh, sir,' says I, ' how shall I thank you, how shall I return your kindness ?' ' By paying particular attention to all I tell you,' says he, ' and above all, Spen, by keeping this conversation and my intentions regarding you, a profound secret, by never mentioning them to a soul.' "

“And the first grateful thing you do is to tell a soul immediately,” said Jacob.

“I could not help it,” said Spen; “I was so delighted that I was obliged to tell you—I should have burst if I hadn’t; but Jacob, you will never repeat it?”

“I will not; you may depend on me, Spen.”

“Well, after he’d talked to me like that, he gave me my first lesson, Hamlet’s advice to the players, and he explained it all to me just as if he were an actor himself; and I can say every line of it;” in illustration of which Spen recited the passage for Jacob’s edification; after which they returned, and Jacob found his father waiting for him.

This was the fourth or fifth time that Mr. Martyn had called since his son had been at Cartown, now about two years. On the last occasion Mr. Martyn expressed himself thoroughly satisfied with Jacob’s progress, and arranged that his son should remain with Mr. Spawling for two years longer, still continuing at school during the

holidays, as he was anxious that Jacob should lose no time in completing his studies. On the first visit Mr. Martyn was on his way to Clumberside ; and Jacob having improved so much in his letter-writing, and having grown into a fine handsome lad, his father had decided that Mr. Bonsall should see him, secretly hoping that if such a misfortune should occur as that of Jacob being left an orphan, before the *Middleton Star* was a magnificent property, the member for the borough would do something for him. It would be easy enough, thought Mr. Martyn, for Mr. Bonsall to get Jacob an appointment in some of the Government offices, though he never for a moment feared that Jacob would require such assistance.

Jacob straightway introduced Spenzonian Whiffler to his father ; but Mr. Martyn was too much engrossed in his son to take any particular notice of Spen, who conducted himself with perfect propriety, disappearing shortly after the introduction, and excusing himself by saying that it was

time for school. Shortly afterwards Mr. Spawling also left on a similar plea, and Jacob and his father sat together, while Dorothy prepared luncheon for Mr. Martyn, and Tom Titsy took the horse to the "Blue Posts" for a refresher of meal and water.

At length, Tom returned with a handsome carriage drawn by two horses, and by this time Jacob and his father were ready to start. Jacob went up to Tom and shook him heartily by the hand, though at first Tom did not intend that there should be such a display of familiarity between them. Jacob looked so much more like a gentleman than when he left Middleton, and the dignity of the Martyns had also increased so greatly, that Tom was a little bashful (notwithstanding that he was now a journeyman) in approaching Jacob, his master's only son. Moreover, Tom had not been so light-hearted and outspoken a fellow since his imprisonment and the departure of Susan, as he was previously. Both these events had exer-

cised a great influence upon him. At one time his mother had cause to fear that he was endeavouring to drown his troubles in drink, and but for the advice and companionship of Dr. Johnson, Tom would undoubtedly have fallen. It was the Doctor who had projected the testimonial to his landlady's son, and this had done much to re-establish Tom's own estimation of himself and to restore an honest pride in his own good name. With regard to Susan, he kept all he felt to himself. Had the Doctor known how much Tom really loved that woman he would have almost despaired of succeeding in any attempt to restore his peace of mind.

"Jacob has grown a fine boy, has he not, Tom?" said Mr. Martyn, taking the reins.

"He has, sir; I'm glad to see him looking so well."

"We must soon have him back again at Middleton; eh, Tom?"

"I should be glad if he were, sir. He's a fine young gentleman now. Cæsar 'll hardly know him."

“Oh, yes, he will,” said Jacob, “we were always such good friends. He will not object to shake hands with me.”

Tom said he hoped Cæsar would not be such an ill-mannered dog as that.

Then Mr. Martyn engaged his son's attention by describing to him the changes he had made at home: how he had built a printing-office in the garden; how he had enlarged the shop and turned it into a counting-house; and how he had otherwise expended a large sum of money. He pointed out to Jacob the great advantages of a good education, and begged him to pay strict attention to his studies, and prepare himself for the day when Martyn & Son should be the principal publishing firm in Middleton—ay, and in the whole county.

Thus their time to a great extent was occupied until they arrived at Clumberside. The lodge gates flew open at Mr. Martyn's approach, and with an extra flourish of an exceedingly handsome whip, Mr. Martyn increased the speed of the horses along a

broad and well-kept carriage drive, and at length pulled up in front of a noble country residence. Mr. Martyn was received by Mr. Bonsall himself, who came out at the same time as his servant, and conducted Jacob and his father into the library, while Tom Titsy drove round to the stables.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Martyn," said Mr. Bonsall, "and you—Master Jacob, I presume."

"Thank you, sir," said Jacob, whose moderate amount of self-possession was a little shaken by the unaccustomed grandeur of the room in which he was desired to be seated.

By-and-by luncheon was announced, after which Jacob was allowed to go into the garden while the newspaper proprietor and the member of Parliament discussed local and imperial politics. Mr. Martyn's paper had been expressly started in the interest of the Yellow party, which had promised Mr. Martyn their substantial support. Mr. Bonsall's election was the first political fruit

of the *Star*, which had absorbed the whole of Mr. Martyn's small fortune.

Jacob had not explored many acres of Mr. Bonsall's estate when he encountered Tom.

"Hurrah! I'm glad I have met you; now Tom, come under this tree and tell me the news."

"There's not much to tell," said Tom, who, yielding to Jacob's influence, sat down on a seat under an old elm.

"Well, how is aunt Keziah?"

"Oh, crotchety, crotchety."

"And Mrs. Titsy?"

"Middling," said Tom; "not quite so fresh as she used to be."

"And Mr. Johnson?"

"He's lively enough: he smokes his pipe, and makes speeches, the same as ever."

"And the pigeons?"

"I don't do much in that way now; I've a few fantails and tipplers."

"Have you one in your pocket now, Tom?" Jacob asked, smiling, and laying his hand on Tom's broad shoulders.

"No," said Tom, quite seriously, "I had one a bit since, though; I let him go from the stables yonder; but I doubt if he'll get home; I've no luck with the birds now."

"Never mind, Tom, if the luck only comes in other more useful things.

"Ah, I've no luck at all," said Tom, shaking his head.

"No luck!—what was that I read about the fifty sovereigns?"

"Well, that was luck of a sort. I had to go to prison though, and I'd rather have given a hundred sovereigns, Jacob, not to have done that."

"How was it, Tom? It is strange I did not notice it in the paper."

"Yes, it was strange. Well, you see, your father, when first he started the *Star*, as you know, did it for the sake of his Yellow principles—liberty, and freedom, and all that."

"And to promote the return of his friend, Mr. Bonsall," Jacob rejoined. "At least that is what I understood."

"Well, our side lost the election, four

years ago, as you know," continued Tom, pushing his hands deeply into his trousers pockets, "and Mr. Martyn had been working hard to get over that, and make it right for the next time ; and, by gum ! when that time came we'd a great fight. Talk about work, by gum ! we were at it night and day. Of course I wanted the Yellows to win, and there was a row somehow or other, and the Doctor knocked a Red drummer into his own drum for calling him 'Blue pills,' and you see somehow it was nearly four o'clock, and a cab full of Red voters came up at the time, and they were saucy, and my blood got up, and I suppose I said something as frightened them about the consequences of voting for the Reds. However, they screwed it into intimidating 'em, and the Doctor was fined for assault ; but my offence was a misdemeanour, I think they called it. But this was at the bottom of it. That thief Magar got me took up, because he wanted to make Susan Harley his mistress, and he was afraid I should be in the way."

"Poor Susan!" exclaimed Jacob. "What an ungrateful beggar I am not to have asked after her before! How is she? Have you heard from her? I often think about her."

"And so do I," said Tom, sighing. "Well, she's been away all this long time, and we've never heard from her not a word. Mother has expected letters over and over again; but all we have got is her love, and that's only second-hand—it comes through Jennings. He said as Mr. Col-linson was a-coming over, but that's a year ago, and nothing has been heard of him since. It makes me very uneasy in my mind."

Tom felt in his pocket for a pigeon as some relief to his feelings, but the bird had gone.

"And I doubt if it will get home," he said.

"Oh, yes, it will, Tom; you are dispirited; the bird will soon be in the dove-cote, and Susan is all right too, depend on it," said Jacob.

"May be, may be," said Tom reflectively; "you see we don't even know whether she's married or not; I'm sure Collinson would treat her well; I wish I could go over and see, and by gum! if he didn't——"

"Where did she sail from?" asked Jacob, interrupting Tom in the midst of an angry shake of the head.

"Liverpool," Tom replied; "I meant to have seen her safe off, but I was in quad, locked up by that infernal Magar. I wish that election had been a long way off Middleton. Magar was awful hard again me, swore my very life away, and lied, Mister Jacob—lied like a blackguard, though he is going to be a magistrate."

"It was very hard," said Jacob, "but it will all come right."

"Hope it will," said Tom.

"How do you get on with type-setting, Tom?"

"Pretty middling," said Tom, "but I don't do much in that way now. I'm a sort of head devil, you see, and I'm often out

with the master as I am to-day, driving him to see some swell or other ; but it's all one to me ; I'm a reg'lar miserable beggar, sir."

At sunset Mr. Bonsall's visitors left Clumberside.

They would have started earlier, only Mr. Martyn had determined upon staying at Crossley all night, so that his horse should not be overworked. Mr. Bonsall, M.P., offered Mr. Martyn every accommodation for the night, but Jacob's father urged important business at Crossley early in the morning as a reason for not partaking further of Mr. Bonsall's hospitality.

Mr. Martyn made no remarks of importance on the way homewards. He smoked his cigar in evident enjoyment. The night being chilly, he drew a rug over Jacob's knees, and told Tom to wrap himself up. The horse's hoofs resounded along the hard road. Trees, and cottages, and stone walls, and fields, and brooks, and road-side inns seemed to race by them in the sunset. Now and then stray leaves deadened the

sound of the carriage wheels, and the autumn wind moaned in the trees. The hips and haws were red on the hedges, and the plover uttered its "weak complaining note" to the sky. The wind rippled the bending corn in waves like summer seas.

The spirit of autumn, which had touched Dorothy and Jacob and Spen, influenced the thoughts of Jacob and his father and Tom. It softened and idealised Jacob's dreamy ideas of love. It led Mr. Martyn from money calculations into vague and shadowy thoughts, upon the vanity of human hopes and wishes, until he could not help feeling that, since autumn was but typical of the close of man's own existence, perhaps contentment and a pipe in the garden at Middleton would have brought him more real happiness than was to be got out of journalism and county influence. The waving corn, the setting sun, the yellow hedgerows, the evening bells, and all the tender influences of the time also found their way into Tom's dull mind. As he cracked his whip he thought how happily

he might have ended his days with Susan, when the autumn of his life came, if fortune had been kind to him.

At Cartown Tom lighted the carriage lamps. Jacob watched them until they glimmered faintly on the hill and, finally disappeared behind the wood which sheltered the cottage home of Lucy Cantrill.





CHAPTER XIII.

A BOY'S WOOING.

IT is a good thing to give vent to your feelings in ink. The relief thus afforded to a heart overcharged either with love or rage is immense. But it is a mistake to post the result of your lucubrations. Write love letters, write angry letters—and burn them. This is worldly wisdom. It was not, however, for common reasons that Jacob tore up a dozen letters which he had written to Lucy Cantrill. He could not sufficiently express his feelings, his pen refused to interpret his thoughts, even the Muses failed to assist him; he copied Tom Moore's amorous lines, "I love but

thee," and burnt them because he was too proud to send second-hand verses to the girl who had enslaved him. At last he made up his mind, like a man, to tell Lucy he loved her, and when he saw her, he only blushed, like a woman. It was about a week after he had first spoken to Lucy that he stole away from Cartown to spend his half holiday in a pilgrimage to the shrine of the factory angel.

"This is a surprise," said Lucy, as she opened the cottage door in response to Jacob's knock.

The factory angel looked more charming than ever. She wore a lilac print dress and a black ribbon round her full fair neck. She was a blonde of the healthy kind. You could see the blood in her cheeks. She was not white, like some blondes, but red and white, the red a blushing rosy red that became vermilion when it reached her lips, which were pouting cherry lips. She stood firmly upon her feet, and carried her head proudly after the manner of a race-horse.

Jacob thought there was a little sarcasm in her reception of him.

"We are glad to see you," said the old woman promptly, as if she thought so too.

"Thank you," said Jacob.

"Pray sit down," said the old woman ;
"how is Dorothy?"

"She is very well," said Jacob.

"That's right; it would be a sad job if somebody didn't keep well," the old woman replied.

"How is Mr. Cantrill?" asked Jacob.

"About the same—no worse, and no better," said the old woman, "and he's getting cross, particular as this is the season when he ought to be out; gamekeeping as a business is at its best when things have to be shot."

"Yes," said Jacob.

"Lucy, my child, draw Mr. Martyn some beer after his walk," said the old woman.


"No, thank you," said Jacob, feeling that it was a degradation for Lucy to wait upon him.

"Oh, yes," said Lucy, "certainly."

Lucy tripped into the pantry, and poured out the beer for Jacob with the grace of a goddess.

Then they talked about Cartown, about Middleton, about the weather, about Mr. Cantrill's illness, about the arduous duties of a gamekeeper, and about a hundred other subjects. Lucy said very little, but she looked her best, and in order that she might do this successfully, she left the room twice to examine herself in her little glass and see that her hair kept its becoming folds. A fashionable lady would have done the same, with the addition of a little fresh rouge upon her cheeks, a general powdering, and a slight revision of her eyebrows.

Jacob was very shy and nervous. Lucy, I fear, did not compassionate him just then. She was enjoying her triumph over him; though he was only a schoolboy, he was not an unworthy conquest. He was a manly looking fellow, and a blonde generally likes a dark lover. Jacob was dark enough, goodness knows; he might have



had gipsy blood in his veins for that matter.

"The wood is very pretty to-day," said Jacob, summoning to his aid all the courage he could command.

"Is it?" said Lucy. "I have not been out to-day."

"Are you going out?" said Jacob, mentally patting himself on the back for his boldness.

"I don't know," Lucy replied. "Perhaps I may by-and-by."

The sunshine was streaming into the cottage.

"It almost seems a pity to stay indoors on such a day as this," Jacob said.

"Perhaps you would like to go for another walk?" said Lucy, looking archly round at Jacob as she wound a worsted ball for the old woman, who was knitting.


"I should very much," said Jacob, "if Mrs. Cantrill could spare you."

"We were talking of you," said Lucy, a little surprised, "not of me."

"I can spare her," said Mrs. Cantrill.
"Go, Lucy ; it will do you good."

"Very well," said Lucy, and she went again to her glass, before which she arranged a pretty light shawl round her shoulders.

Half an hour afterwards Jacob and Lucy were in the wood, walking beneath elms, chestnuts, and beech trees, from which the leaves were falling ; still there were many trees yet unshaken, the oaks making a magnificent show with their yellow leaves. As yet there was none of autumn's humidity in the air. The atmosphere was dry and clear. Lucy and Jacob walked long, and talked little. Jacob gathered blackberries for Lucy, and presented them to her in burdock leaves. Once she was frightened by a snake, which started at her very feet, and flashed over the path like a gleam of light. Jacob said he thought Lucy was used to the woods and fields. Lucy replied that she was not, and never should be. This little incident induced the boy to offer her his arm. She took it.



There was a great deal of happiness in that—at any rate so far as Jacob was concerned. The leaves falling had no sad influence on his feelings upon this memorable occasion. While Lucy was with him, his thoughts were of her and her alone. Lucy certainly did not dislike his companionship, but whether it gave her the pleasure that Jacob wished to inspire it is impossible to say. Women are mysteries from their childhood.

Jacob entertained Lucy with an account of his visit to Clumberside. Then he related to her the respective histories of Tom and Susan, telling her how poor Tom was desperately in love with Susan, and how she had married somebody else, in which episode Lucy seemed very much interested.

“And now I am going to ask you a favour,” said Jacob, as they passed into an unusually shady recess of the wood.

“Indeed ; what is it ?” Lucy inquired.

“Will you grant it ?”

“Perhaps.”

“Will you try to do so ?”

"Yes," said Lucy, beginning to think that Jacob was not so school-boyish as she had thought him.

"Well then, I want you to call me Jacob."

"Is that all?" inquired Lucy, and Jacob felt a trifle less happy than he had done a few minutes before. He had asked what seemed to be the question of his life.

"I think it is a great deal," said Jacob.

"If you particularly wish it," said Lucy, "I will—Jacob——" and her voice softened as she spoke his name, to which Jacob responded by an almost imperceptible pressure of the arm he loved so dearly.

"And now another favour?" said Jacob, surprising himself not more than he surprised Lucy.

"You may ask too many favours; I thought you were very bashful," said Lucy.

"I am," said Jacob.

"I don't think so," said Lucy.

Jacob's bashfulness was giving way before the warmth of his feelings. Moreover, he had been rewarded for his pre-

vious act of courage. Lucy had said "yes" to his first question. He was determined to go on, though his cheeks were burning and his hands were on fire.

"I want to ask you to let me call you Lucy," said the intrepid youth.

Lucy did not speak.

"You are angry with me," said Jacob his voice trembling.

"No," said Lucy, "it is time we returned."

"May I not call you Lucy?" said Jacob again, in sheer desperation.

He pressed her hand; she returned Cupid's familiar signal. Jacob's heart beat with joy. He could not speak.

At this moment a girl from the gipsy encampment crossed their path and curtsied to Lucy. The vagrant was the beauty of her tribe. She was well dressed, though her feet were bare. After she had passed they saw her watching them at the bend of the road, where they crossed the brook to go out of the wood. There was

something in the girl's manner which Jacob did not like.

"Do the gipsies stay here all the year round?" he asked.

"I think so," said Lucy.

"Are you afraid of them?"

"No, I think not; I often meet that girl; I don't think I like her; she is considered very beautiful."

"She is following us," said Jacob, turning round on the bridge.

"She is always very civil when I meet her; never forgets to curtsy, as you saw her," said Lucy.

"Does she beg?" Jacob asked.

"Beg!" said Lucy; "she is as haughty as a queen; I think her mother is the Queen of the North."

"Then you are not frightened at gipsies," said Jacob, musing, as they continued their walk home.

"No; there is no reason why I should be frightened. They are not interfered with on this estate; my lord, I have always heard, is most kind to them."

"Your house is very lonely," said Jacob, and he thought of the cottage in the dark nights of winter.

"Yes; but the watchers are about all night," said Lucy.

"The watchers?" said Jacob.

"Yes; uncle's men, you know — the keepers—there are several of them."

"To protect the game?" said Jacob.

"Yes."

"I wish I were one of them," said Jacob.

"Why?"

"That I might be near to guard you," said the boy, drawing himself up to his full height.

When they reached the cottage, tea was on the table. It was sunset, and Jacob had several miles to walk. But he thought nothing of the journey, and would not have hurried to leave had not Lucy spoken of the distance. Mrs. Cantrill said Master Martyn must just have one cup of tea, which would refresh him for his walk to Cartown. Jacob had one cup, and was still in no hurry to go; he had another, and

still remained gossiping with old Mrs. Cantrill and gazing at Lucy. At length Lucy said it was growing late, and as she said so she looked at Jacob, saying, as plainly as possible with her eyes, "Don't you think you had better leave us? you have a long way to go." So Jacob rose from his seat, shook hands with Mrs. Cantrill, and said "Good night."

"Please to gie my love to Dorothy," said the old woman.

Lucy opened the door, and when Jacob shook hands with her, he said "Good night" in a lower voice than that in which he had previously spoken, and finding that Lucy's hand was not withdrawn from his when he detained it for a few moments more than was necessary, he said, "dear Lucy," and hurried away down the garden and over the meadow into the wood.



CHAPTER XIV.

OF LUCY'S HISTORY.

IT was dark when Jacob reached Cartown; so very dark that in passing the churchyard he began to whistle—as if whistling would have laid Petroski's ghost should it have had a mind to appear. It was late enough for Mr. Spawling to look for an explanation from Jacob, who gave it with tolerable fairness, under the circumstances. He had walked as far as Cantrill's cottage—it was a long way—but he had hoped to be home sooner.

“We were becoming alarmed on your account, Jacob,” said Mr. Spawling. “There has been a grand sunset. I forgive you.”

Dorothy, who passed through the room as Mr. Spawling was speaking, looked sundry meaning things at Jacob, as he replied to Mr. Spawling in some general terms relative to autumnal tints.

"Spenny has been wishing for you. We have been reading together, and he is now busily engaged with Shakespeare in my room, where I shall be glad to see you, Jacob, for a quarter of an hour after you have supped; it will soon be bedtime;" saying which, Mr. Spawling left the room.

"Autumnal tints!" said Dorothy, when the schoolmaster had gone. "Beautiful sunset! Oh, Jacob, Jacob! Did you forget to ask how my poor father was?"

"No, I did not, Dorothy. He continues about the same."

"Ah, poor soul! that's what I heard by the post this morning. Well, and how's Lucy? Did she like the autumn tints and the fine scenery?"

"Don't sneer, Dorothy."

"I'm not sneering, Jacob. I only asked

a civil question," said Dorothy, laughing. "Was she *very* much delighted with the trees and the leaves falling? Did you say some poetry to her?"

"Dorothy, I shall be savage with you."

"Oh, you'll be savage, will you? Was Lucy savage, then? Wouldn't she sing to you?"

"Dorothy, Dorothy," said Jacob, "don't."

"Well, I won't then. But, Jacob, mind what you are about; you mustn't go wandering off to mother's without telling me, and you are over young to be love-making, and so is Lucy."

"I was obliged to go, Dorothy. You will not tell, will you?"

"Tell who?"

"Mr. Spawling, or Spen, or anybody."

"Are you ashamed of Lucy then?" asked Dorothy sharply.

"Ashamed, Dorothy? No. But I don't want to be laughed at as you were laughing at me just now."

"Then I won't do it again. But how could anybody help laughing at you talking

of autumn tints, as if Lucy was autumn tints?"

"Lucy is everything to me," said Jacob. "I wish you would tell her so, Dorothy."

"No, no, Jacob; do your own courting; I'll be no go-between. But what will your father say?"

"I don't care what anybody says. I would give a thousand pounds if I were two or three years older."

"You'll get over that, Jacob. You'll mend of that, lad, every day."

"Dorothy, I feel that you are my friend," said Jacob, rising from his seat and taking her hand; "will you assist me? will you find out if Lucy loves me? will you say something for me?"

"Well, you are nearly of an age, and I really think you would suit each other, and if you can't screw your courage up, lad, I'll tell her; but you'll do it. And do you think she doesn't know? lor bless you!"

"Thank you, Dorothy, thank you; and now let me tell you what I mean to do, Dorothy. I shall study harder than ever,

and I will go into the world, and work, until I show her that I am not a boy. Oh, Dorothy, if you only knew what I feel, if you could but tell what I think about Lucy, I am sure you would help me. If I cared nothing about her I could talk to her by the hour, almost as fast as Spen, if I wanted. But she is different to everybody else; I can't talk to her. I love her so much that I am too happy to speak. I don't know what I am saying when she is there, and I want to say so much. I think of a thousand things to say to her, and never say one of them."

"That's it; oh yes, I know it; you're in love, lad; you're in love, sure enough," said Dorothy excitedly. "I can feel for you, I can feel for you! I declare I feel quite overcome."

Jacob was delighted at this manifestation of Dorothy's interest in his feelings.

"He didn't say it so well; but that is just how Jim used to feel when I knew him first."

"Why, Dorothy, then you have——"

"Don't ask me about it ; don't say anything about it. He's dead and gone now, I know he is ; six years at sea, and I've had no letter for nigh upon two."

"Oh, then, that is what the mail meant," said Jacob.

Dorothy could not restrain a few tears, and Jacob tried his art of soothing in a variety of gentle admonitions and snatches of advice, and a variety of hopeful *ifs*. "Don't fret, Dorothy. He will come back ; I have heard of people being away a great deal longer."

"No, no, Jacob ; he would have written : and I've seen shrouds in the candle, and coffins have popped out of the fire. Oh, no, no."

Dorothy rocked herself to and fro for a few moments, and then gradually recovered.

"You've never asked about Lucy's father and mother," she said at length, wiping her eyes.

"I understood they were dead," said Jacob.

"Her mother died an hour after she was



born, and her father was ordered to India with his regiment a week afterwards."

"Tell me all about it, Dorothy," said Jacob.

"Her mother was my mother's youngest sister, and an ensign in the army fell in love with her. He was very young at the time: it was in this way. The regiment was in Middleton for a fortnight, and my grandfather was a farmer; mother's youngest sister was very pretty, and was staying on a visit at Middleton. The young officer followed her several times, and at last went into the house where she was stopping, and said right out he loved her, and asked for her father. After that he went and saw her father, and got his consent to go and see her, and they were regularly engaged. When the regiment went to other quarters the officer wrote to Lucy's mother every week, and a year afterwards married her; but his father disowned him for it."

"How hard-hearted!" said Jacob.

"Yes, hard-hearted it was. Well, she lived happily enough with him for about a

year, and then came home for a little while, when Lucy was born, and her poor dear mother died, as I have told you. The father was nearly broken-hearted, and more so that he was ordered to India. I've heard mother tell the story many a time, and cried at it till my eyes have been swelled up. When he went, he left as much money as he could for the support of the child."

"Poor Lucy, *dear* Lucy!" said Jacob, deeply interested in Dorothy's unexpected and romantic narrative.

"But time wore on, and as he never came back, the money was spent; and grandfather getting old and infirm, things went wrong with him, and at last he followed grandmother to the grave. Soon there was nobody left but mother, who was married to father before the youngest sister was wed, of course; so Lucy went to live with them. When she was about ten the housekeeper of Mr. Bradforth, who owns the factory, took a fancy to her, and got Mr. Bradforth to let her come and live in

the house with her, and be in the factory. The gentleman being kind, and hearing a bit about Lucy's history, consented, and the housekeeper taught her to read and write so well that Lucy got a prize for Scripture reading at the Sunday school. About this time, father, who was groom for Squire Northcotes, got the situation as head keeper at Dunswood, and then when he took to be ill sometimes, and mother was not so nimble as she had been, they thought Lucy might come and keep house for them ; and I thought so too, because Mr. Bradforth's housekeeper, the latter part of Lucy's time at the factory, used to let her work more than I thought was good for her ; and what was more, she was getting to an age when she would be better away from such society as there is in a factory, though she is as good as she is beautiful. That's her history, as far as I know. I've told you all mother has told me, and I ought to know it, all the times I've heard it. So you see Lucy's got good blood in her veins, Master Jacob. Her

father was an officer in the army, and her mother was the daughter of parents who were honest enough, if they were not so rich as they might have been."

"You amaze me!" said Jacob; "why it is quite a romance, the history of Lucy's life! but a very sorrowful one. Poor Lucy! What was her father's name, then?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you that," Dorothy replied. "His name was Thornton!"

"Then Lucy's proper name is Thornton."

"Yes, it is; but we've always called her Cantrill."

"Well, you are a gossiping couple," said Spen, entering the room. "Mr. Spawling has been waiting for you this half hour, Jacob, and now he's gone to bed."

"I am sorry he waited, Spen, but Dorothy and I have been having a long chat, and the time has gone very quickly."

"Time travels in divers places with divers persons," said Spen. "I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots

withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands withal. But no, 'tis getting late. We must *to bed—to bed*—friend Jacob.”

“Always lively, Spen, always funny,” said Jacob.”

“I’m brimful of Shakespeare to-night, Jacob; but it’s not all fun. It’s grand, Jacob. If learning Shakespeare was learning grammar, I should soon be a scholar.”

“I don’t think you could learn better grammar, Spen,” said Jacob.

“I declare the boy’s head’s turned with Shakespeare—one hears about nothing else now—I shall go to bed;” whereupon, Dorothy put a bundle of sticks into the kitchen oven, removed the chairs a little distance from the fire, screwed down the window cotter, lighted candles for Jacob, Spen, and herself; and then the three bade each other “Good night.”



CHAPTER XV.

A MAN'S TROUBLES.



DULL February morning. Mr. Martyn had just breakfasted at a shining square table in the general room of the new Hummums Hotel, Covent Garden. He lighted a cigar, and stood at the door of the house to smoke. There was a cold sombre cloud hanging over the garden; the atmosphere harmonised with Mr. Martyn's thoughts. The rime frost still clung to some waggon-loads of winter-greens. Mr. Martyn presently strolled into the market. He looked vacantly at the fruits and flowers. He was thinking of the last effort he was about to make to save himself

from bankruptcy. A tray of violets carried his mind back for a moment to early days, but he could not afford to indulge in a reverie on flowers. Over breakfast he had read a letter from Jacob, in which our hero had expressed a desire to go into the world and commence the battle of life. Jacob said he had worked hard for many months; that he had studied night and day, and that Mr. Spawling was more than satisfied with his progress; that he had made up in these latter days for any early neglect of his education. Jacob said nothing about Lucy, though he had thought of her all the time he was writing. What pretty secrets, what pleasant mysteries Love permits to his votaries.

Mr. Martyn walked and smoked and calculated his chances of success and failure, until he stood before the London chambers of Mr. Bonsall, M.P., in Piccadilly. It was eleven o'clock, and the servant said the hon. member had not yet breakfasted.

"There was a very late sitting of the House last night," said the man.

"I have particular business with Mr. Bonsall, and will wait," said Mr. Martyn.

"I will take up your card," said the man.

The provincial journalist followed the man into a handsome little room, where a bachelor's breakfast was waiting for the rising member for Middleton.

Presently Mr. Bonsall entered. He was a tall, square-built man, with hard features, though the mouth bespoke that peculiar power of talk which belongs to a certain class of men who come to the front at public meetings of all kinds. You could see at once that there was no sentiment in Mr. Bonsall's constitution. He was a business man, sir; looked at life from a practical point of view: he reduced feelings to figures, and balanced them up as he did his steward's book. He looked at his watch as he entered the room, and made up his mind to get rid of Mr. Martyn within half an hour.

"Ah, Mr. Martyn," he said, "I am glad to see you. Charles" (calling to his servant), "Mr. Martyn will have breakfast."

"No, thank you," said Mr. Martyn, "I have breakfasted."

"Mr. Martyn has breakfasted," said the member to Charles, who at once left the room with the additional plates which he was about to place on the table.

"I hope you are well," said Mr. Martyn. "You are compelled to keep later hours in town than are observed at Clumber-side."

"Yes," said Mr. Bonsall. "These late sittings are not conducive to health ; I am not so well as I was ; you will take a cup of coffee at all events."

"Thank you, yes, I will," said Mr. Martyn.

"Charles, Mr. Martyn will take some coffee," said the member.

"How is Middleton getting on?" asked the member, chipping his morning egg. "I am told trade is bad there, and I suppose that was to be expected ; the depression is perfectly natural ; money is too cheap—trade requires the stimulus of a rising discount ; the money market is the

surest barometer of the commercial atmosphere."

"I suppose it is," said Mr. Martyn, "though I do not find money cheap in the common acceptance of the term at all events; the iron trade is in a miserable state, and we have two thousand colliers out on strike."

"That is bad, though I hold that the collier has a perfect right to strike; his labour represents capital, and it is for him to assess the value of that capital."

"There, Mr. Bonsall, you know we differ; but we will discuss the point at some other time; I dare say you have important business to attend to this morning, and I have come to town especially to talk over with you a matter that concerns you indirectly and myself in a very important degree."

"Yes," said Mr. Bonsall. "Take a little more coffee" (refilling Mr. Martyn's cup). "I should like to argue that question of the relation of capital to labour and *vice versa*; but we will reserve it, as you say,

for a more convenient opportunity. What is our business together this morning?—nothing like seeing a man on business and doing business promptly.”

“The newspaper,” said Mr. Martyn, his voice faltering a little, “the *Middleton Star*.”

“Yes, I congratulate you upon it, Mr. Martyn. It is admirably conducted and well written, though I doubt whether you are not just a trifle too liberal in your treatment of our opponents. For my own part, I think uncompromising enmity the policy in politics. If an opponent were known privately to be an angel, I should insist on calling him a devil, sir,” said Mr. Bonsall. “Give the other side credit for nothing, sir, but tyranny, selfishness, and knavery.”

“I know your views upon that subject,” said Mr. Martyn. “You remember when first you suggested that I should start this newspaper?”

“No, not exactly,” said the hon. member, though he remembered the circumstance perfectly well. “Did I suggest it?”

"Most certainly," said Mr. Martyn. "I remember our talking about it, before the first election when you were defeated."

"Some years ago. It must be a very long time ago."

"The party wanted a paper, you wanted a paper, I was enthusiastic for a paper, we all wanted an organ," said Mr. Martyn.

"Yes, I remember something of it."

"Mr. Bonsall," said the journalist, rising, "why this pretended want of memory? Is it because you have heard that the paper is in difficulties?"

"No, my dear sir; I simply do not quite remember the circumstance; pray don't excite yourself."

"Then of course you quite forget the promises which you and your agent made to me when I consented to enter upon this enterprise?"

"Promises!" said Mr. Bonsall, looking up with an expression of great surprise. "Pray explain. I do not quite understand you."

"The *Middleton Star* was projected and

started in the interest of the party," said Mr. Martyn. "I believed then, and I do now, that the party represented those principles which mean the national good and the national welfare; I felt that apart from its political views, a well conducted and independent journal would be successful; you and your agents promised me substantial aid if I required it. 'We are not particular to a couple of thousand pounds if you want it,' you said; my reply was that I should put all my own money into it before I asked for the party's assistance. I looked for a fair reward for my capital and energy. I have been disappointed. The chief success has been in electing you, and thus maintaining the supremacy of the party at Middleton after a struggle of many years. Not only have I spent all my own money, I have borrowed of others, and the present stagnation of trade compels me to remind you of your promise: that is the explanation of my visit this morning."

"And to be business-like and to the

point, you have come to ask me for a large sum of money ?" said Mr. Bonsall.

"Two thousand pounds," said Mr. Martyn. "I have already sunk in the paper four thousand of my own. I am now threatened in respect of a sum borrowed ; threatened with almost immediate execution. I am more than solvent ; I have more than twenty shillings in the pound if the property were available. A thousand pounds would put my affairs in a comparatively healthy position ; two thousand would make the paper."

"Who is pressing you ?"

"A member of our own party."

"That is strange."

"He is a gas shareholder to a large amount, and is interested in other schemes which I have not always supported."

"Ah, you should always stick to your party."

"I have done so, as a party."

"But you should also adhere to individual members of it. When a man goes

in for politics he reduces the thing to a simple matter of figures ; he——”

“ I know your theory,” said Mr. Martyn, interrupting the member ; “ you used to say that I returned you to Parliament ; you said so on the hustings.”

“ That was unwise on my part ; for once in my life my feelings overcame my judgment ; it was not respectful to my constituents. But who is the person who is pressing you for this money ?”

“ Magar,” said Mr. Martyn. “ I must have been hard up indeed to have borrowed from him.”

“ A very rising man,” said the member ; “ energetic, plain-spoken, a thorough party man. And how is Mr. Magar ? He was a miller, I think ?”

“ He is a scoundrel,” said the journalist ; “ a deep, designing, vulgar ruffian.”

“ Really, Mr. Martyn !” said the member, laying down his knife and fork and leaning back in his chair.

“ Plain-speaking,” said the journalist ; “ I thought you admired plain-speaking.”

Mr. Bonsall rang the bell.

"Charles, if Lord Fazbale calls, detain him ; I am very anxious to see him."

"Yes, sir," said Charles, leaving the room as softly as he had entered it.

"I am wasting your time and my own, I fear," said Mr. Martyn ; "is my mission successful?"

"In respect of the money?" said the member, with tantalising coolness.

"Yes."

"Well, you see, Mr. Martyn," said the member, rising and planting his feet firmly upon the hearth-rug, and giving his back the full benefit of the fire ; "the question is a very delicate one. Prior to my election I should have had no difficulty ; then I was not pledged to the national work as it were ; then I was not in the House, bound to its dictum of honour and independence ; now, in my present position as a member of Parliament, as a legislator having taken certain oaths and entered upon certain duties, it would ill become me to advance money in the interest of party journalism.

As a matter of inclination I should like to write you a cheque for two thousand pounds; as a question of duty I cannot."

"That is your answer. I don't understand the pretended philosophy of it, but it means No."

"I fear so."

"In spite of your own words, 'We shall not be particular to a couple of thousand if ever you require the money.'"

"I don't remember the words," said the honest, plain-spoken, liberal-minded, and eloquent member for Middleton.

"You remember being returned?"

"Yes," said Mr. Bonsall, "and I shall always acknowledge myself much indebted to you, Mr. Martyn, for that honour, and I regret that you and I in this present business cannot quite agree with each other's views."

"There is an old English proverb," said the journalist, "'I taught you to swim and you drown me.'"

"I don't believe in proverbs," said Mr. Bonsall. "If you reduce them to facts and

figures you find the balance of experience against them ; they are the aphorisms of disappointment."

"Good morning," said Mr. Martyn.

"Good morning, Mr. Martyn," said the member. "I hope we shall meet on a subject in which we mutually agree the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you."

Mr. Martyn had played his last card. When Don Quixote rescued the galley-slaves they rewarded him with stones and stole his squire's ass. The provincial journalist found London a desert. He never had felt so lonely as he felt while walking along Waterloo Place, for he selected to go in that direction when he left Piccadilly. He passed the fine clubhouse where he had once dined with Mr. Bonsall and half a dozen other members of the House of Commons. Arrived at Trafalgar Square, he walked round the fountains there—round and round, until he thought a policeman looked curiously at him ; then he went into the National

Gallery and sat down opposite a Turner, his mind, however, being far away from the sunny mists of the famous landscape. "Poor Jacob," he said to himself. "Poor Jacob."

Presently Mr. Martyn returned to his hotel.

"Let me have my bill," he said, sitting down at an empty table near the fire.

"Right, sir," was the quick response.

"Very cold morning," said a gruff voice at the opposite side of the room.

Mr. Martyn recognised a gentleman whom he had seen in the smoke-room on the previous night.

"It is," said Mr. Martyn.

"Excuse me, you look as if we were both in the same box," said the stranger.

"I don't understand," said the journalist.

"You look disappointed."

"I am," said Mr. Martyn.

"Committee business?" said the stranger.

"No," said Mr. Martyn.

"I have seen you before," said the stranger.

"I think I can say the same with regard to yourself," said Mr. Martyn.

"Yes," said the stranger. "I've been up now every session for six years; for five years I have opposed a railway coming through my estate, and for five years I have beaten the marauders in one way or another; this time they have beaten me."

"Indeed," said Mr. Martyn, wondering for a moment how much good money had been wasted in the litigation.

"Yes; this session I came up to oppose the line going in a fresh direction, instead of through my land; they actually, sir, had the audacity to make fresh plans and leave me out of their calculations altogether! and, by the Lord Harry! they have licked me, sir! and it has cost me, one way and another, not less than twenty thousand pounds."

The obstinate old man tossed off the last glass of a bottle of sherry, and smacking his lips, said, "But I'll be even with the

beggars yet, if it costs me another twenty."

And yet Mr. Martyn's dear and honest hopes were to be blighted, his good name sullied, his son's future made miserable perhaps, for the want of a couple of thousand pounds !

THE END OF VOL. I.

